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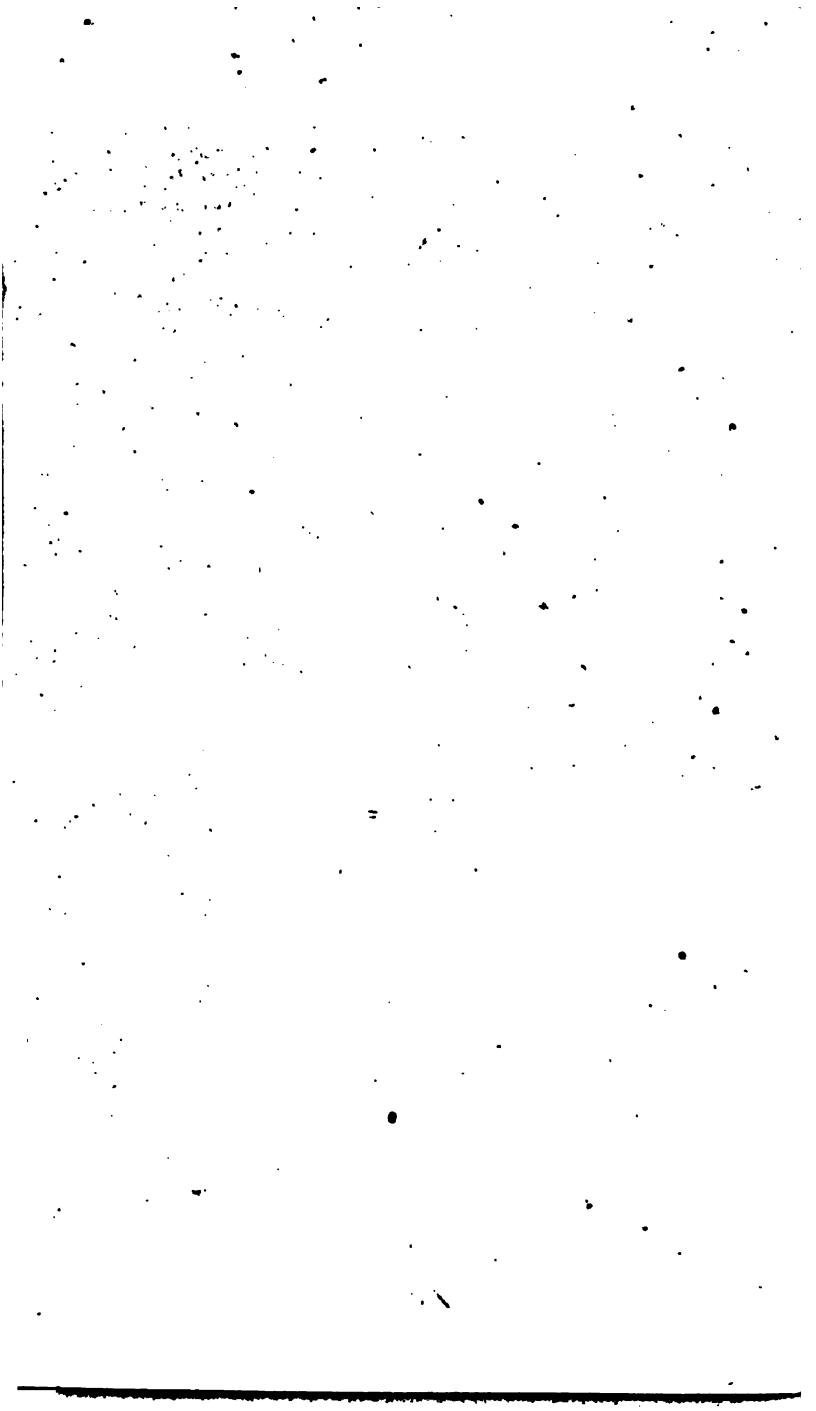

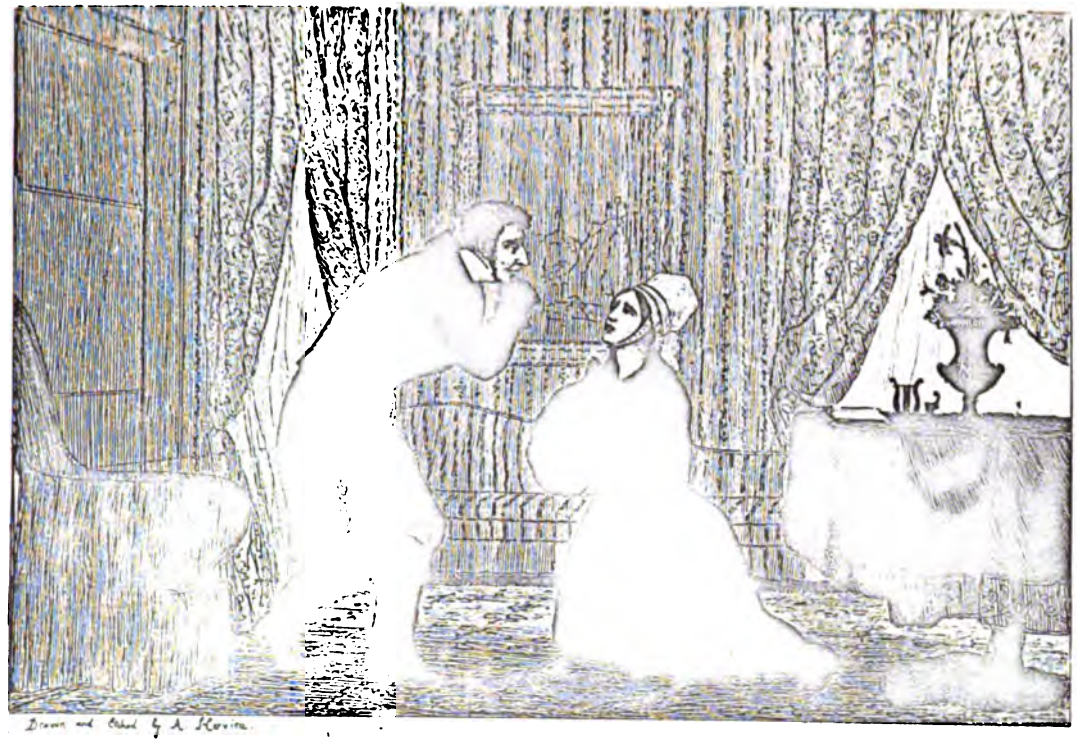
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THE

VICAR OF WREXHILL.

BY MRS. TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF

"JONATHAN JEFFERSON WHITLAW," "DOMESTIC MANNERS OF THE AMERICANS," "TREMORDYN CLIFF," &c.

Les bons et vrais dévots qu'on doit suivre à la trace
Ne sont pas ceux aussi qui font tant de grimace.
Hé, quoi! . . . vous ne ferez nulle distinction
Entre l'hypocrisie et la dévotion?
Vous les voulez traiter d'un semblable langage,
Et rendre même honneur au masque qu'au visage?

MOLIÈRE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
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1837.

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THE

VICAR OF WREXHILL.

CHAPTER I.

CHARLES MOWBRAY'S ARRIVAL AT THE PARK.

Never had Rosalind Torrington so strongly felt the want of some one to advise her what to do, as the morning after this disagreeable scene. Had she consulted her inclination only, she would have remained in her own apartments till the return of Mrs. Mowbray and Helen. But more than one reason prevented her doing so. In the first place, she was not without hope that her letter would immediately bring young Mowbray home; and it would be equally disagreeable to miss seeing him, by remaining in her dressing-room, or

to leave it expressly for the purpose of doing so: and secondly, however far her feelings might be from perfect confidence and esteem towards Miss Cartwright, she felt that she owed her something, and that it would be ungrateful and almost cruel to leave her tête-à-tête with the bewildered Fanny, or en tiers with her and the vicar.

She therefore determined to run the risk of encountering Mr. Cartwright as usual, but felt greatly at a loss how to treat him. Their last démêlé had been too serious to be forgotten by either; and her opinion of him was such, that far from wishing to conciliate him, or in any way to efface the impression of what she had said on leaving him, her inclination and her principles both led her to wish that it should be indelible, and that nothing should ever lessen the distance that was now placed between them. But Rosalind felt all the difficulty of maintaining this tone towards a person not only on terms of intimate friendship with the family, but considered by part of it as a man whose word ought to be law. She

began to fear, as she meditated on the position in which she was placed, that Mowbray Park could not long continue to be her home. The idea of Helen, and what she would feel at losing her, drew tears from her eyes; and then the remembrance of her Irish home, of her lost parents, and the terrible contrast between what she had heard last night, and the lessons and opinions of her dear father, made them flow abundantly.

The day passed heavily. Miss Cartwright appeared to think she had done enough, and devoted herself almost wholly to the perusal of a French metaphysical work which she had found in the library. Fanny was silent and sad, and seemed carefully to avoid being left for a moment alone with Rosalind. Mr. Cartwright made no visit to the house during the morning: but Judy informed her mistress, when she came to arrange her dress for dinner, that the reverend gentleman had been walking in the shubberies with Miss Fanny; and in the evening he made his entrance, as usual, through the drawing-room window.

It was the result of a strong effort produced by very excellent feeling, that kept Rosalind in the room when she saw him approach; but she had little doubt that if she went, Miss Cartwright would follow her, and she resolved that his pernicious tête-à-têtes with Fanny should not be rendered more frequent by any selfishness of hers.

It was evident to her from Mr. Cartwright's manner through the whole evening, that it was his intention to overload her with gentle kindness, in order to set off in strong relief her harsh and persecuting spirit towards him. But not even her wish to defeat this plan could enable her to do more than answer by civil monosyllables when he spoke to her.

Miss Cartwright laid aside her book and resumed her netting as soon as she saw him approach; but, as usual, she sat silent and abstracted, and the conversation was wholly carried on by the vicar and his pretty proselyte. No man, perhaps, had a greater facility in making conversation than the Vicar of Wrex-

hill: his habit of extempore preaching, in which he was thought by many to excel, probably contributed to give him this power. But not only had he an endless flow of words wherewith to clothe whatever thoughts suggested themselves, but moreover a most happy faculty of turning everything around him to account. Every object, animate or inanimate, furnished him a theme; and let him begin from what point he would, (unless in the presence of noble or influential personages to whom he believed it would be distasteful,) he never failed to bring the conversation round to the subject of regeneration and grace, the blessed hopes of himself and his sect, and the assured damnation of all the rest of the world.

Fanny Mowbray listened to him with an earnestness that amounted to nervous anxiety, lest she should lose a word. His awful dogmas had taken fearful hold of her ardent and ill-regulated imagination; while his bland and affectionate manner, his fine features and grace-

ful person, rendered him altogether an object of the most unbounded admiration and interest to her.

As an additional proof, probably, that he did not shrink from persecution, Mr. Cartwright again opened the piano-forte as soon as the tea equipage was removed, and asked Fanny if she would sing with him.

"With you, Mr. Cartwright!" she exclaimed in an accent of glad surprise: "I did not know that you sang. Oh! how I wish that I were a greater proficient, that I might sing with you as I would wish to do!"

"Sing with me, my dear child, with that sweet and pious feeling which I rejoice to see hourly increasing in your heart. Sing thus, my dearest child, and you will need no greater skill than Heaven is sure to give to all who raise their voice to the glory of God. This little book, my dear Miss Fanny," he continued, drawing once more the manuscript volume from his pocket, "contains much that your pure and innocent heart will approve.

Do you know this air?" and he pointed to the notes of "Là ci darem' la mano."

"Oh yes!" said Fanny; "I know it very well."

"Then play it, my good child. This too we have taken as spoil from the enemy, and instead of profane Italian words, you will here find in your own language thoughts that may be spoken without fear."

Fanny instantly complied; and though her power of singing was greatly inferior to that of Rosalind, the performance, aided by the fine bass voice of Mr. Cartwright, and an accompaniment very correctly played, was very agreeable. Fanny herself thought she had never sung so well before, and required only to be told by the vicar what she was to do next, to prolong the performance till considerably past Mr. Cartwright's usual hour of retiring.

About an hour after the singing began, Henrietta approached Miss Torrington, and said in a whisper too low to be heard at the

instrument, "My head aches dreadfully. Can you spare me?"

As she had not spoken a single syllable since the trio entered the drawing-room after dinner, Rosalind could not wholly refrain from a smile as she replied "Why, yes; I think I can."

"I am not jesting; I am suffering, Rosalind. You will not leave that girl alone with him?"

"Dear Henrietta!" cried Rosalind, taking her hand with ready sympathy, "I will not, should they sing psalms till morning. But is there nothing I can do for you — nothing I can give you that may relieve your head?"

"Nothing, nothing! Good night!" and she glided out of the room unseen by Fanny and unregarded by her father.

It more than once occurred to Miss Torrington during the two tedious hours that followed her departure, that Mr. Cartwright, who from time to time stole a glance at her, prolonged his canticles for the purpose of making her sit to hear them; a species of pe-

nance for her last night's offence by no means ill imagined.

At length, however, he departed; and after exchanging a formal "Good night," the young ladies retired to their separate apartments.

Rosalind rose with a heavy heart the following morning, hardly knowing whether to wish for a letter from Charles Mowbray, which it was just possible the post might bring her, or not. If a letter arrived, there would certainly be no hope of seeing him; but if it did not, she should fancy every sound she heard foretold his approach, and she almost dreaded the having to answer all the questions he would come prepared to ask.

This state of suspense, however, did not last long; for, at least one hour before it was possible that a letter could arrive, Charles Mowbray in a chaise and four foaming post-horses rattled up to the door.

Rosalind descried him from her window before he reached the house; and her first feeling was certainly one of embarrassment, as she remembered that it was her summons which had

brought him there. But a moment's reflection not only recalled her motives, but the additional reasons she now had for believing she had acted wisely; so, arming herself with the consciousness of being right, she hastened down stairs to meet him, in preference to receiving a message through a servant, requesting to see her.

She found him, as she expected, in a state of considerable agitation and alarm; and feeling most truly anxious to remove whatever portion of this was unnecessary, she greeted him with the most cheerful aspect she could assume, saying, "I fear my letter has terrified you, Mr. Mowbray, more than I wished it to do. But be quite sure that now you are here, everything will go on as it ought to do; and of course, when your mother returns, we can neither of us have any farther cause of anxiety about Fanny."

"And what is your cause of anxiety about her at present, Miss Torrington? For God's sake explain yourself fully; you know not how I have been tormenting myself by fearing I know not what."

"I am bound to explain myself fully," said Rosalind gravely; "but it is not easy, I assure you."

"Only tell me at once what it is you fear. Do you imagine Mr. Cartwright hopes to persuade Fanny to marry him?"

"I certainly did think so," said Rosalind; "but I believe now that I was mistaken."

"Thank God!" cried the young man fervently. "This is a great relief, Rosalind, I assure you. I believe now I can pretty well guess what it is you do fear; and though it is provoking enough, it cannot greatly signify. We shall soon cure her of any fit of evangelicalism with which the vicar is likely to infect her."

"God grant it!" exclaimed Rosalind, uttering a fervent ejaculation in her turn.

"Never doubt it, Miss Torrington. I have heard a great deal about this Cartwright at Oxford. He is a Cambridge man, by the way, and there are lots of men there who think him quite an apostle. But the thing does not take at Oxford, and I assure you, he and his

elective grace are famously quizzed. But the best of the joke is, that his son was within an ace of being expelled for performing more outrageous feats in the larking line than any man in the university; and in fact he must have been rusticated, had not his pious father taken him home before the business got wind, *to prepare him privately for his degree.* They say he is the greatest pickle in Oxford; and that, spite of the new light, his father is such an ass as to believe that all this is ordained by Providence only to make his election more glorious."

"For his election, Mr. Mowbray, I certainly do not care much; but for your sister—though I am aware that at her age there may be very reasonable hope that the pernicious opinions she is now imbibing may be hereafter removed, yet I am very strongly persuaded that if you were quite aware of the sort of influence used to convert her to Mr. Cartwright's Calvinistic tenets, you would not only disapprove it, but use very effectual measures to put her quite out of his way."

"Indeed!—I confess this appears to me very unnecessary. Surely the best mode of working upon so pure a mind as Fanny's is to reason with her, and to show her that by listening to those pernicious rhapsodies she is in fact withdrawing herself from the church of her fathers: but I think this may be done without sending her out of Mr. Cartwright's way."

"Well," replied Rosalind very meekly, "now you are here, I am quite sure that you will do everything that is right and proper. Mrs. Mowbray cannot be much longer absent; and when she returns, you will perhaps have some conversation with her upon the subject."

"Certainly.—And so Sir Gilbert has absolutely refused to act as executor?"

"He has indeed, and spite of the most earnest entreaties from Helen. Whatever mischief happens, I shall always think he is answerable for it; for his refusal to act threw your mother at once upon seeking counsel from Mr. Cartwright, as to what it was necessary

for her to do; and from that hour the house has never been free from him for a single day."

"Provoking obstinacy!" replied Mowbray: "yet, after all, Rosalind, the worst mischief, as you call it, that can happen, is our not being on such pleasant terms with them as we used to be. And the colonel is at home too; I must and will see him, let the old man be as cross as he will.—But where is your little saint? you don't keep her locked up, I hope, Rosalind? And where is this Miss of the new birth that you told me of?"

Young Mowbray threw a melancholy glance round the empty room as he spoke, and the kind-hearted Rosalind understood his feelings and truly pitied him. How different was this return home from any other he had ever made!

"The room looks desolate — does it not, Mr. Mowbray? — Even I feel it so. I will go and let Fanny know you are here; but what reason shall I assign for your return?"

"None at all, Miss Torrington. The whim

took me, and I am here. Things are so much better than I expected, that I shall probably be back again in a day or two; but I must contrive to see young Harrington."

Rosalind left the room heartily glad that Fanny's brother was near her, but not without some feeling of mortification at the little importance he appeared to attach to the information she had given him.

A few short weeks before, Rosalind would have entered Fanny's room with as much fredom as her own; but the schism which has unhappily entered so many English houses under the semblance of superior piety was rapidly doing its work at Mowbray Park, and the true friend, the familiar companion, the faithful counsellor, stood upon the threshold, and ventured not to enter till she had announced her approach by a knock at the dressing-room door.

"Come in," was uttered in a gentle and almost plaintive voice by Fanny.

Miss Torrington entered, and, to her great

astonishment, saw Mr. Cartwright seated beside Fanny, a large Bible lying open on the table before them.

She looked at them for one moment without speaking. The vicar spread his open hand upon the Bible, as if to point out the cause of his being there; and as his other hand covered the lower part of his face, and his eyes rested on the sacred volume, the expression of his countenance was concealed.

Fanny coloured violently,—and the more so, perhaps, because she was conscious that her appearance was considerably changed since she met Miss Torrington at breakfast. All her beautiful curls had been carefully straightened by the application of a wet sponge; and her hair was now entirely removed from her forehead, and plastered down behind her poor little distorted ears as closely as possible.

Never was metamorphosis more complete. Beautiful as her features were, the lovely picture which Fanny's face used to present to the eye, required her bright waving locks to com-

plete its charm; and without them she looked more like a Chinese beauty on a japan screen, than like herself.

Something approaching to a smile passed over Rosalind's features, which the more readily found place there, perhaps, from the belief that Charles's arrival would soon set her ringlets curling again.

"Fanny, your brother is come," said she, "and he is waiting for you in the drawing-room."

"Charles?" cried Fanny, forgetting for a moment her new character; and hastily rising, she had almost quitted the room, when she recollected herself, and turning back said,

"You will come too, to see Charles, Mr. Cartwright?"

"I will come as usual this evening, my dear child," said he with the appearance of great composure; "but I will not break in upon him now. Was his return expected?" he added carelessly as he took up his hat; and as he spoke, Rosalind thought that his eye glanced towards her.

"No indeed!" replied Fanny: "I ne
was more surprised. Did he say, Rosali
what it was brought him home?"

"I asked him to state his reason for i
replied Miss Torrington, "and he told
he could assign nothing but whim."

Rosalind looked in the face of the vicar
she said this, and she perceived a slight, l
to her perfectly perceptible change in
expression. He was evidently relieved fr
some uneasy feeling or suspicion by what
had said.

"Go to your brother, my dear child; let
not detain you from so happy a meeting fo
moment."

Fanny again prepared to leave the roo
but as she did so, her eye chanced to r
upon her own figure reflected from a mir
above the chimney-piece. She raised l
hand almost involuntarily to her hair.

"Will not Charles think me looking v
strangely?" said she, turning towards M
Cartwright with a blushing cheek and v
bashful eye.

He whispered something in her ear in reply, which heightened her blush, and induced her to answer with great earnestness, "Oh no!" and without farther doubt or delay, she ran down stairs. Miss Torrington followed her, not thinking it necessary to take any leave of the vicar, who gently found his way down stairs, and out of the house, as he had found his way into it, without troubling any servant whatever.

CHAPTER II.

CHARLES'S AMUSEMENT AT HIS SISTER'S APPEARANCE.—HE DISCUSSES HER CASE WITH ROSALIND.

Rosalind and Fanny entered the drawing room together, and young Mowbray at th sound of their approach sprang forward t meet them; but the moment he threw hi eyes on his sister, he burst forth into a fi of uncontrollable laughter, and though h kissed her again and again, still between ever embrace he broke out anew, with every de monstration of vehement mirth.

"I am very glad to see you, Charles," sai Fanny with a little sanctified air that certainl was very amusing; "but I should like it bette if you did not laugh at me."

"But my dear, dear, dearest child! ho

can I help it?" replied her brother, again bursting into renewed laughter. "Oh, Fanny, if you could but see yourself just as you look at this moment! Oh! you hideous little quiz! I would not have believed it possible that any plastering or shearing in the world could have made you look so very ugly. Is it not wonderful, Miss Torrington?"

"It certainly alters the expression of her countenance in a very remarkable manner;" replied Rosalind.

"The expression of a countenance may be changed by an alteration from within, as well as from without," said Fanny, taking courage, and not without some little feeling of that complacency which the persuasion of superior sanctity is generally observed to bestow upon its possessors.

"Why, you most ugly little beauty!" cried Charles, again giving way to merriment; "you don't mean to tell me that the *impayable* absurdity of that poor little face is owing to anything but your having just washed your hair?"

"It is owing to conviction, Charles," replied Fanny with great solemnity.

"Owing to conviction?—To conviction of what, my poor little girl?"

"To conviction that it is right, brother."

"Right, child, to make that object of yourself? What in the world can you mean, Fanny?"

"I mean, brother, that I have an inward conviction of the sin and folly of dressing our mortal clay to attract the eyes and the admiration of the worldly."

"By worldly, do you mean of all the world?" said Rosalind.

"No, Miss Torrington. By worldly, I mean those whose thoughts and wishes are fixed on the things of the earth.

"And it is the admiration of such only that you wish to avoid?" rejoined Rosalind.

"Certainly it is. Spiritual-minded persons see all things in the spirit—do all things in the spirit: of such there is nothing to fear."

Young Mowbray meanwhile stood looking

at his sister, and listening to her words with the most earnest attention.

At length he said, more seriously than he had yet spoken, "To tell you the truth, little puritan, I do not like you at all in your new masquerading suit: though it must be confessed that you play your part well. I don't want to begin lecturing you, Fanny, the moment I come home; but I do hope you will soon get tired of this foolery, and let me see my poor father's daughter look and behave as a Christian young woman ought to do. Rosalind, will you take a walk with me? I want to have a look at my old pony."

Miss Torrington nodded her assent, and they both left the room together, leaving Fanny more triumphant than mortified.

"He said that my persecutions would begin as soon as my election was made sure! Oh! why is he not here to sustain and comfort me! But I will not fall away in the hour of trial; I will not fear what man can do unto me!"

The poor girl turned her eyes from
window whence she saw her brother
Rosalind walking gaily and happily, as
thought, in search of the old pony, and h
tened to take refuge in her dressing-room, n
rendered almost sacred in her eyes by
pastoral visit she had that morning receiv
there.

The following hour or two gave Fanny
first taste of martyrdom. She was, or at le
had been, devotedly attached to her broth
and the knowing him to be so near, yet
distant from her, was terrible. Yet was
not altogether without consolation. She op
ed the Bible,—that Bible that *he* had so lat
interpreted to her (fearful profanation!)
such a manner as best to suit his own vie
and by means of using the process he h
taught her, though unconsciously perha
she contrived to find a multitude of texts,
proving that she and the vicar were qu
right, and all the countless myriads w
thought differently, quite wrong. Then f
lowed a thanksgiving which might have b

fairly expressed in such words as "Lord, I thank thee, I am not like other men!" and then, as the sweet summer air waved the acacias to and fro before her windows, and her young spirit, panting for lawns and groves, sunshine and shade, suggested the idea of her brother and Rosalind enjoying it all without her, her poetical vein came to her relief, and she sat down to compose a hymn, in which, after rehearsing prettily enough all the delights of summer rambles through verdant fields, for four stanzas, she completed the composition by a fifth, of which 'sin,' 'begin,' 'within,' formed the rhymes,—and 'Lord' and 'reward,' the crowning couplet.

This having recourse to "song divine" was a happy thought for her, inasmuch as it not only occupied time which must otherwise have hung with overwhelming weight upon her hands, but the employment soon conjured up, as she proceeded, the image of Mr. Cartwright, and the pious smile with which he would receive it from her hands, and the soft approval spoken more by the eyes than the

lips, and the holy caress—such, according to his authority, as that with which angel meets angel in the courts of heaven.

All this was very pleasant and consoling to her feelings; and when her hymn was finished, she determined to go down stairs, in order to sing it to some (hitherto) profane air, which she might select from among the songs of her sinful youth.

As she passed the mirror, she again glanced at her disfigured little head; but at that moment she was so strong in "conviction," that, far from wishing to accommodate her new birth of *coiffure* to worldly eyes, she employed a minute or two in sedulously smoothing and controlling her rebellious tresses, and even held her head in stiff equilibrium to prevent their escape from behind her ears.

"Good and holy man!" she exclaimed aloud, as she gave a parting glance at the result of all these little pious coquetries. "How well I know what his kind words would be, if he could see me now! 'Of such are the king-

dom of heaven, Fanny,' he would say. And of such," she added with a gentle sigh, "will I strive to be, though all the world should join together to persecute me for it."

While Mr. Cartwright's prettiest convert was thus employed, Miss Torrington and Charles Mowbray, far from being engaged in chasing a pony, or even in looking at the summer luxury of bloom which breathed around them as they pursued their way through the pleasure-grounds, were very gravely discussing the symptoms of her case.

"It is a joke, Rosalind, and nothing more," said the young man, drawing her arm within his. "I really can do nothing but laugh at such folly, and I beg and entreat that you will do the same."

"Then you think, of course, Mr. Mowbray, that I have been supremely absurd in sending you the summons I did?"

"Far, very far otherwise," he replied gravely. "It has shown me a new feature in your character, Miss Torrington, and one which

not to admire would be a sin, worse even than poor Mr. Cartwright would consider your wearing these pretty ringlets, Rosalind."

"*Poor* Mr. Cartwright!" repeated Rosalind, drawing away her arm. "How little do we think alike, Mr. Mowbray, concerning that man!"

"The chief difference between us on the subject, I suspect, arises from your thinking of him a great deal, Rosalind, and my thinking of him very little. I should certainly, if I set about reasoning on the matter, feel considerable contempt for a middle-aged clergyman of the Church of England who manifested his care of the souls committed to his charge by making their little bodies comb their hair straight, for the pleasure of saying that it was done upon conviction. But surely there is more room for mirth than sorrow in this."

"Indeed, indeed, you are mistaken!—and that not only as regards the individual interests of your sister Fanny,—though, God knows, I think that no light matter,—but as a subject that must be interesting to every Christian soul

that lives. Do not make a jest of what involves by far the most important question that can be brought before poor mortals: it is unworthy of you, Mr. Mowbray."

"If you take the subject in its general character," replied Charles, "I am sure we shall *not* differ. I deplore as sincerely as you can do, Miss Torrington, the grievously schismatic inroad into our national church which these self-chosen apostles have made. But as one objection against them, though perhaps not the heaviest, is the contempt which their absurd puritanical ordinances have often brought upon serious things, I cannot but think that ridicule is a fair weapon to lash them withal."

"It may be so," replied Rosalind, "and in truth it is often impossible to avoid using it; but yet it does not follow that the deeds and doctrines of these *soi-disant* saints give more room for mirth than sorrow."

"Well, Rosalind, give me your arm again, and I will speak more seriously. The very preposterous and ludicrous manner which Fanny, or her spiritual adviser, has chosen for showing

forth her own particular regeneration, has perhaps led me to treat it more slightly than I should have done had the indications of this temporary perversion of judgment been of a more serious character. That is doubtless one reason for the mirth I have shown. Another is, that I conceive it would be more easy to draw poor little Fanny back again into the bosom of Mother Church by laughing at her, rather than by making her believe herself a martyr."

"Your laughter is a species of martyrdom which she will be taught to glory in enduring. But at present I feel sure that all our discussions on this topic must be in vain. I rejoice that you are here, though it is plain that you do not think her situation requires your presence; and I will ask no further submission of your judgment to mine, than requesting that you will not leave Mowbray till your mother returns."

"Be assured I will not: and be assured also, that however much it is possible we may differ as to the actual atrocity of this new vicar, or

the danger Fanny runs in listening to him, I shall never cease to be grateful, dearest Miss Torrington, for the interest you have shown for her, and indeed for us all."

"Acquit me of silly interference," replied Rosalind, colouring, "and I will acquit you of all obligation."

"But I don't wish to be acquitted of it," said Charles rather tenderly: "you do not know how much pleasure I have in thinking that you already feel interested about us all!"

This was giving exactly the turn to what she had done which poor Rosalind most deprecated. The idea that young Mowbray might imagine she had sent for him from *a general feeling of interest for the family*, had very nearly prevented her writing at all—and nothing but a sense of duty had conquered the repugnance she felt at doing it. It had not been a little vexing to perceive that he thought lightly of what she considered as so important; and now that in addition to this he appeared to conceive it necessary to return thanks for the *interest* she had manifested, Rosalind turned away her head,

and not without difficulty restrained the tears which were gathering in her eyes from falling. She was not in general slow in finding words to express what she wished to say; but at this moment, though extremely desirous of answering *suitably*, as she would have herself described the power she wanted, not a syllable would suggest itself which she had courage or inclination to speak: so, hastening her steps towards the house, she murmured, "You are very kind—it is almost time to dress, I believe," and left him.

Charles felt that there was something wrong between them, and decided at once very generously that it must be his fault. There is nothing more difficult to trace with a skilful hand than the process by which a young man and maiden often *creep* into love, without either of them being at all aware at what moment they were first seized with the symptoms. When the parties *fall* in love, the thing is easy enough to describe: it is a shot, a thunderbolt, a whirlwind, or a storm; nothing can be more broadly evident than their hopes and their ecs-

tasies, their agonies and their fears. But when affection grows unconsciously, and, like a seed of mignonette thrown at random, unexpectedly shows itself the sweetest and most valued of the heart's treasures, overpowering by its delicious breath all other fragrance, the case is different.

Something very like this creeping process was now going on in the heart of young Mowbray. Rosalind's beauty had appeared to him veiled by a very dark cloud on her first arrival from Ireland: she was weary, heartsick, frightened, and, moreover, dressed in very unbecoming mourning. But as tears gave place to smiles, fears to hopes, and exhausted spirits to light-hearted cheerfulness, he found out that "she was very pretty indeed"—and then, and then, and then, he could not tell how it happened himself, so neither can I; but certain it is, that her letter gave him almost as much pleasure as alarm; and if, after being convinced that there was no danger of Mr. Cartwright's becoming his brother-in-law, he showed a somewhat unbecoming degree of levity in his manner of treating Fanny's case, it must be attributed to the

gay happiness he felt at being so unexpectedly called home.

As for the heart of Rosalind, if anything was going on therein at all out of the common way, she certainly was not aware of it. She felt vexed, anxious, out of spirits, as she sought her solitary dressing-room: but it would have been no easy task to persuade her that LOVE had anything to do with it.

CHAPTER III.

CHARLES WALKS OVER TO OAKLEY.—THE VICAR IMPROVES IN HIS OPINION.

At the time Miss Torrington observed to Mr. Mowbray that it was near dressing-time, it wanted about four hours of dinner; so, having followed her with his eyes as she mounted the steps and entered the house, he drew out his watch, and perceiving that he had quite enough time for the excursion before "dressing-time" would be over, set off to walk to Oakley.

How far Rosalind might have been disposed to quarrel with him for the very small proportion of meditation which he bestowed on Fanny during his delightful stroll through the well-known shady lanes, or how far she might have been tempted to forgive him for the much

greater portion devoted to herself, it is impossible to say; but he arrived at Sir Gilbert's hall-door in that happy state of mind which is often the result of a delicious day-dream, when Hope lends the support of her anchor to Fancy.

Sir Gilbert and the colonel were out on horseback, the servant said — but "my lady is in the garden." And thither Mowbray went to seek her.

He was somewhat startled at his first reception; for the old lady watched his approach for some steps, standing stock-still, and without giving the slightest symptom of recognition. At length she raised her glass to her eye and discovered who the tall stranger was; upon which she sent forth a sound greatly resembling a view "hollo!" which immediately recalled the servant who had marshalled Mowbray to the garden, and without uttering a word of welcome, gave the following order very distinctly:

"Let Richard take the brown mare and ride her sharp to Ramsden. Sir Gilbert is gone to the post-office, the bank, the sadler's, and the

nursery-garden. Let him be told that Mr. Mowbray is waiting for him at Oakley — and let not a single instant be lost."

The rapid manner in which "Very well, my lady," was uttered in reply, and the man vanished out of sight, showed that the order was likely to be as promptly executed as spoken.

"My dear, dear Charles!" cried the old lady; then stepping forward and placing her hands in his, "What brings you back to Mowbray? But never mind what it is—nothing very bad, I hope, and then I must rejoice at it. I am most thankful to see you here, my dear boy. How is my sweet Helen? — could you not bring her with you, Charles?"

"She is in London, my dear Lady Harrington, with my mother. Where is the colonel?"

"With his father;—they will return together; no grass will grow under their horses' feet as they ride homeward to meet you, Charles! But how comes it that you are at home? If you have left Oxford, why are you not with your mother and Helen?"

A moment's thought might have told Mow-

bray that this question would certainly be asked, and must in some manner or other be answered; but the moment's thought had not been given to it, and he now felt considerably embarrassed how to answer. He lamented the estrangement already existing, however, too sincerely, to run any risk of increasing it by ill-timed reserve, and therefore, after a moment's hesitation, very frankly answered—"I can tell you, my dear lady, why I am here, more easily than I can explain for what purpose. I returned post to Mowbray this morning, because Miss Torrington gave me a private intimation by letter, that she thought the new Vicar of Wrexhill was obtaining an undue influence over the mind of Fanny. She did not express herself very clearly, and I was fool enough to imagine that she supposed he was making love to her: but I find that her fears are only for poor little Fanny's orthodoxy. Mr. Cartwright is one of the evangelical, decidedly, I believe, the most mischievous sect that ever attacked the established church; and Miss Torrington, not without

good reason, fears that Fanny is in danger of becoming a proselyte to his gloomy and unchristian-like doctrine. But, at her age, such a whim as this is not, I should hope, very likely to be lasting."

"I don't know that!" replied Lady Harrington sharply. "Miss Torrington has acted with great propriety, and exactly with the sort of promptitude and decision of character for which I should have given her credit. Beware, Mr. Mowbray, how you make light of the appearance of religious schism among you: it is a deadly weapon of discord, and the poison in which it is dipped seldom finds an antidote either in family affection or filial obedience."

"But Fanny is so nearly a child, Lady Harrington, that I can hardly believe her capable of manifesting any very dangerous religious zeal at present."

"You don't know what you are talking about, Charles! Of every family into which this insidious and most anti-christian schism has crept, you would find, upon inquiry, that

in nine instances out of ten, it has been the young girls who have been selected as the first objects of conversion, and then made the active means of spreading it afterwards. Don't treat this matter lightly, my dear boy! Personally I know nothing of this Mr. Cartwright;—we never leave our parish church and our excellent Dr. Broughton, to run after brawling extempore preachers;—but I have been told by one or two of our neighbours who do, that he is what is called a *shining light;* which means, being interpreted, a ranting, canting fanatic. Take care, above all things, that your mother does not catch the infection."

"My mother!—Oh no! Her steady principles and quiet good sense would render such a falling off as that quite impossible."

"Very well! I am willing to hope so. And yet, Charles, I cannot for the life of me help thinking that she must have had some other adviser than her own heart when she left my good Sir Gilbert's letter without an answer."

"Of what letter do you speak, Lady Harrington?" said young Mowbray, colouring;—

"of that whereby he refused to execute the trust my father bequeathed him?"

"No, Charles! Of that whereby he rescinded his refusal."

"Has such a letter been sent?" inquired Mowbray eagerly. "I never heard of it."

"Indeed! Then we must presume that Mrs. Mowbray did not think it worth mentioning. Such a letter has, however, been sent, Mr. Mowbray; and I confess, I hoped, on seeing you arrive, that you were come to give it an amicable, though somewhat tardy answer, in person."

"I am greatly surprised," replied Charles, "to hear that such a letter has been received by my mother, because I had been led to believe that Sir Gilbert had declared himself immovable on the subject; but still more am I surprised that I should not have heard of it. Could Helen know it, and not tell me? It must have been to her a source of the greatest happiness, as the one which preceded had been of the deepest mortification and sorrow."

"Your sister, then, saw the first letter?"

"She did, Lady Harrington, and wrote me word of it, with expressions of the most sincere regret."

"But of the second she said nothing? That is not like Helen."

"So little is it like her, that I feel confident she never heard of the second letter."

"I believe so too, Charles. But what, then, are we to think of your mother's having shown the first letter, and concealed the second?"

"It cannot be! my mother never conceals anything from us. We have never, from the moment we left the nursery, been kept in ignorance of any circumstance of general interest to the family. My poor father's constant phrase upon all such occasions was—'Let it be discussed in a committee of the whole house.'"

"I cannot understand it," replied the old lady, seating herself upon a bench in the shade; "but, at any rate, I rejoice that you did not all think Sir Gilbert's recantation—which was not written without an effort, I

promise you—so totally unworthy of notice as you have appeared to do."

Charles Mowbray seated himself beside her, and nearly an hour was passed in conversation on the same subject, or others connected with it. At the end of that time, Sir Gilbert, booted and spurred, appeared at the door of the mansion, followed by his son. There was an angry spot upon his cheek, and though it was sufficiently evident that he was eager to meet young Mowbray, it was equally so that he was displeased with him.

Lady Harrington, however, soon cleared the way to the most frank and cordial communication, rendering all explanation unnecessary by exclaiming, "He has never seen nor heard of your second letter, Sir Gilbert—nor Helen either."

The baronet stood still for a moment, looking with doubt and surprise first at his wife, and then at his guest. The doubt, however, vanished in a moment, and he again advanced, and now with an extended hand, towards Charles.

A conversation of some length ensued; but as it consisted wholly of conjectures upon a point that they were all equally unable to explain, it is unnecessary to repeat it. The two young men met each other with expressions of the most cordial regard, and before they parted, Colonel Harrington related the conversation he had held with Helen and Miss Torrington, the result of which was his father's having despatched the letter whose fate appeared involved in so much mystery.

Lady Harrington, notwithstanding those who did not love her called her masculine, showed some feminine tact in not mentioning to Sir Gilbert that it was a letter from Miss Torrington which had recalled Charles. It is probable that when her own questionings had forced this avowal from him, she had perceived some shade of embarrassment in his answer; but she failed not to mention the *serious* turn that Fanny Mowbray appeared to have taken, and her suspicions that the new Vicar of Wrexhill must have been rather

more assiduous than was desirable in his visits at the Park.

"The case is clear—clear as daylight, my lady: I understand it all. 'By their fruits ye shall know them,'—and by them shall ye know their fruits. Stop a moment, Charles: if you won't stay dinner, you must stay while I furnish you with a document by means of which you may, I think, make a useful experiment."

Without waiting for an answer, Sir Gilbert left the party in the garden and hurried into the house, whence he returned in a few minutes with a scrap of paper in his hand.

"Fortunately, Charles, very fortunately, I have kept a copy of my last note to your mother. I am sure I know not what induced me to keep it: had such a thing happened to Mr. Cartwright, he would have declared it providential—but I in my modesty only call it lucky.—Take this paper, Charles, and read it if you will: 'tis a d—d shame you have not read it before! You say, I think, that

the vicar is expected at Mowbray this evening: just put this scrap of paper into his hand, and ask him if he ever read it before. Let him say what he will, I give you credit for sufficient sharpness to find out the truth. If he has seen it, I shall know whom I have to thank for the insolent contempt it has met with."

"But my mother!" cried Charles with emotion. "Is it possible that she could conceal such a note as this from her children, and show it to this man? Sir Gilbert, I cannot believe it."

"I don't like to believe it myself, Charles; upon my soul I don't. But what can we think? At any rate, make the experiment to-night; it can do no harm; and come here to dinner to-morrow to tell us the result."

"I will come to you with the greatest pleasure, and bring you all the intelligence I can get. My own opinion is, that the note was lost before it reached my mother's hands. The usual hour, I suppose, Sir Gilbert,—six o'clock?"

"Six o'clock, Charles,—and, as usual, punctual to a moment."

When Mowbray reached his home, it was in truth rather more than time to dress; but he kept the young ladies waiting as short a time as possible. Fanny presented him in proper style to Miss Cartwright as soon as he appeared in the drawing-room; and he had the honour of giving that silent young lady his arm to the dining-room.

Charles thought her deep-set black eyes very handsome; nevertheless he secretly wished that she were a hundred miles off, for her presence, of course, checked every approach to confidential conversation.

Nothing, indeed, could well be more dull and unprofitable than this dinner. Miss Cartwright spoke not at all; Fanny, no more than was necessary for the performance of her duty at the head of the table; and Rosalind looked pale and languid, and so completely out of spirits that every word she spoke seemed a painful effort to her. She was occupied in recalling to mind the tone and air of the party

who dined together in that same room about six months before, when Charles had last returned from Oxford. The contrast these recollections offered to the aspect of the present party was most painful; and as Rosalind turned her eyes round the table with a look of wistful melancholy, as if looking for those who were no longer there, her thoughts were so legibly written on her countenance that Mowbray understood them as plainly as if they had been spoken.

"Rosalind, will you take wine with me?—You look tired and pale." This was said in a tone of affectionate interest that seemed to excite the attention of Henrietta; and when Miss Torrington raised her eyes to answer it, she observed that young lady's looks fixed on Mr. Mowbray's countenance with an expression that denoted curiosity.

The whole party seemed glad to escape from the dinner-table; and the young ladies, with light shawls and parasols, had just wandered out upon the lawn, when they met Mr. Cartwright approaching the house.

Fanny coloured, and looked at her brother. Miss Cartwright coloured too; and her eyes followed the direction of Fanny's, as if to see how this familiar mode of approach was approved by Mr. Mowbray.

Charles certainly felt a little surprised, and did not take much pains to conceal it. For a moment he looked at the vicar, as if not quite certain who it was, and then, touching his hat with ceremonious politeness, said haughtily enough, "Mr. Cartwright, I believe?"

It would have been difficult for any one to find fault with the manner in which this salutation was returned. In a tone admirably modulated between profound respect and friendly kindness, his hat raised gracefully from his head to greet the whole party, and his handsome features wearing an expression of the gentlest benevolence, Mr. Cartwright hoped that he had the happiness of seeing Mr. Mowbray well.

Charles felt more than half ashamed of the reception he had given him, and stretched out his hand as if to atone for it. The vicar felt

his advantage, and pursued it by the most easy, winning, yet respectful style of conversation. His language and manners became completely those of an accomplished man of the world; his topics were drawn from the day's paper and the last review: he ventured a jest upon Don Carlos, and a *bon mot* upon the Duke of Wellington; took little or no notice of Fanny; spoke affectionately to his daughter, and gaily to Miss Torrington; and, in short, appeared to be as little deserving of all Rosalind had said of him as it was well possible for a gentleman to be.

"Fair Rosalind has certainly suffered her imagination to conjure up a bugbear in this man," thought Charles. "It is impossible he can be the violent fanatic she describes."

After wandering about the gardens for some time, Fanny proposed that they should go in to tea; but before they reached the house, Mr. Cartwright proposed to take his leave, saying that he had an engagement in Wrexhill, which was to prevent his lengthening his visit.

The adieu had been spoken on all sides, and the vicar turned from them to depart, when Charles recollected the commission he had received from Sir Gilbert, and that he had promised to report the result on the morrow. Hastily following him, therefore, he said, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Cartwright; but, before you go, will you have the kindness to read this note, and tell me if you know whether my mother received such a one before she went to London?"

Mr. Cartwright took the note, read it attentively, and then returned it, saying, "No, Mr. Mowbray, I should certainly think not: not because I never saw or heard of it, but because I imagine that if she had, she would not have proceeded to London without Sir Gilbert. Was such a note as that sent, Mr. Mowbray?"

Charles had kept his eye very steadily fixed on the vicar, both while he read the note, and while he spoke of it. Not the slightest indication, however, of his knowing anything about it was visible in his countenance, voice, or

manner; and, again as he looked at him, young Mowbray felt ashamed of suspicions for which there seemed to be so little cause.

"Such a note as this was sent, Mr. Cartwright," he frankly replied: "but I suspect that by some unlucky accident it never reached my mother's hands; otherwise, as you well observe, she would not, most assuredly, have set off to London on this business without communicating with Sir Gilbert Harrington."

"I conceive it must be so, indeed, Mr. Mowbray; and it is greatly to be lamented, for the receiving it would have saved poor Mrs. Mowbray much anxiety and trouble."

"She expressed herself to you as being annoyed by Sir Gilbert's refusing to act?"

"Oh yes, repeatedly; so much so, indeed, that nothing but the indispensable duty of my parish prevented my offering to accompany her to London myself. I wished her very much to send for you; but nothing would induce her to interrupt your studies."

It is not in the nature of a frank-hearted young man to doubt statements thus simply

uttered by one having the bearing and appearance of a gentleman; and Charles Mowbray reported accordingly at the dinner-table of Sir Gilbert, assuring him that the *test* had proved Mr. Cartwright's innocence on this point most satisfactorily.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. STEPHEN CORBOLD.

We must now follow Mrs. Mowbray and Helen to London, as some of the circumstances which occurred there proved of importance to them afterwards. The journey was a very melancholy one to Helen, and her feelings as unlike as possible to those which usually accompany a young lady of her age, appearance, and station, upon a visit to the metropolis. Mrs. Mowbray spoke very little, being greatly occupied by the volume recommended to her notice, at parting, by Mr. Cartwright; and more than once Helen felt something like envy at the situation of the two servants, who, perched aloft behind the carriage, were enjoying without restraint the rapid movement, the

fresh air, and the beautiful country through which they passed; while she, like a drooping flower on which the sun has ceased to shine, hung her fair head, and languished for the kindly warmth she had lost.

They reached Wimpole Street about eight o'clock in the evening, and found everything prepared for them with the most sedulous attention in their handsome and commodious apartments.

Mrs. Mowbray was tired, and, being really in need of the refreshment, blessed the hand, or rather the thought, which had forestalled all her wants and wishes, and spread that dearest of travelling banquets, tea and coffee, ready to greet her as she entered the drawing-room.

"This letter has been left for you, ma'am, by the gentleman who took the apartment," said the landlady, taking a packet from the chimney-piece; "and he desired it might be given to you immediately."

Mrs. Mowbray opened it; but perceiving it enclosed another, the address of which she glanced her eye upon, she folded it up again,

and begged to be shown to her room while the tea was made.

Her maid followed her, but was dismissed with orders to see if Miss Mowbray wanted anything. As soon as she was alone, she prepared to examine the packet, the receipt of which certainly startled her, for it was in the handwriting of Mr. Cartwright, from whom she had parted but a few hours before.

The envelope contained only these words:

"Mr. Stephen Corbold presents his respectful compliments to Mrs. Mowbray, and will do himself the honour of waiting upon her to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock."

"Gray's Inn, July 13th, 1833."

Mrs. Mowbray ran her eyes very rapidly over these words, and then opened the enclosed letter. It was as follows:—

"Do not let the unexpected sight of a letter from your minister alarm you, my dear and much-valued friend. I have nothing painful to disclose; and my sole object in writing is to make you feel that though you are distant

from the sheltered spot wherein the Lord hath caused you to dwell, the shepherd's eye which hath been appointed to watch over you is not withdrawn.

"I am no longer a young man, my dear Mrs. Mowbray; and during the years through which I have passed, my profession, my duty, and my inclination have alike led me to examine the souls of my fellow-creatures, and to read them, as it were, athwart the veil of their mortal bodies. Habit and application have given me, I believe, some skill in developing the inward character of those amongst whom I am thrown: nor can I doubt that the hand of God is in this, as in truth it is in all things if we do but diligently set ourselves to trace it;—I cannot, I say, but believe that this faculty which I feel so strong within me, of discerning in whom those spirits abide that the Lord hath chosen for his own,—I cannot but believe that this faculty is given me by his especial will and for his especial glory. I wish well, sincerely well, to the whole human race: I would never lose an opportunity of lifting my

voice in warning to them, in the hope that peradventure there may be one among the crowd who may turn and follow me. But, my friend, far different is the feeling with which my soul clings with steadfast care and love to those on whom I see the anointing finger of the Lord. It is such that I would lead, even as a pilot leadeth the vessel intrusted to his skill, into the peaceful waters, where glory, and honour, and joy unspeakable and without end, shall abide with them for ever!

"Repine not, oh! my friend, if all your race are not of these. Rather rejoice with exceeding great joy that it hath pleased the Holy One to set his seal on two. To this effect, look round the world, my gentle friend, and see what myriads of roofs arise beneath which not one can be found to show forth the saving power of Christ. Mark them! how they thread the giddy maze, and dance onward down the slippery path that leads to everlasting damnation! Mark this, sweet spirit! and rejoice that you and your Fanny are snatched from the burning! My soul revels in an ecstasy of rap-

ture unspeakable, as I gaze upon you both, and know that it is I, even I, whom the Lord hath chosen to lead you to his pastures. What are all the victories and glories of the world to this? Think you, my gentle friend, that if all the worldly state and station of Lambeth were offered me on one side, and the task of leading thy meek steps into the way of life called me to the other, that I should hesitate for one single instant which to choose?

"Oh no! Trust me, I would meet the scorn and revilings of all men—ay, and the bitterest persecutions that ever the saints of old were called upon to bear, rather than turn mine eyes from thee and the dear work of thy salvation, though princedoms, principalities, and powers might be gained thereby!

"Be strong then in faith, be strong in hope; for thou art well loved of the Lord, and of him whom it hath been His will to place near thee as his minister on earth!

"Be strong in faith! Kneel down, sweet friend!—even now, as thine eye reads these characters traced by the hand of one who would

give his life to guard thy soul from harm, kneel down, and ask that the Holy Ghost may be with thee,—well assured that he who bids thee do so will at the same moment be kneeling, likewise, to invoke blessings on thy fair and virtuous head!

"At a moment when the heart is drawn heavenward, as mine is now, how hateful—I may say, how profane, seem those worldly appellations and distinctions with which the silly vanity of man has sought to decorate our individual nothingness! How much more befitting a serious Christian is it, in such a moment as this, to use that name which was bestowed by the authority of Christ! You have three such, my sweet friend. The two first are now appropriated, as it were, to your daughters; but the third is more especially your own.—Clara! On Clara may the dew of Heaven descend like healing balm! On Clara may the Saviour and the Lamb set his seal! On Clara may the Holy Ghost descend to keep and overshadow her from all danger!—Kneel then, sweet Clara!—thou chosen handmaid of the Lord!

kneel down, and think that William Cartwright kneels beside thee!

"Written on my knees in the secret recesses of my own chamber.—W. C."

No sooner did Mrs. Mowbray's eye reach the words "kneel down," than she obeyed them, and in this attitude read to the end of the epistle. Mrs. Mowbray's feelings, whenever strongly excited, either by joy, sorrow, or any other emotion, always showed themselves in tears, and she now wept profusely—vehemently; though it is probable she would have been greatly puzzled to explain why, even to herself. She would certainly, however, have declared, had she spoken on the subject to any one, that those tears were a joy, a blessing, and a comfort to her. But as she had nobody to whom she could thus open her heart, she washed her eyes with cold water, and descended with all the composure she could assume to Helen and the tea-table.

Notwithstanding this precaution, Helen's watchful eye perceived that her mother had

been weeping, and, forgetting the unnatural coldness which a breath more fatal than pestilence had placed between them, she exclaimed with all her wonted tenderness,

"What is the matter, dear mamma?—I trust that no bad news has met you?"

If all other circumstances left it a matter of doubt whether evangelical influence (as it is impiously called) were productive of good or evil, the terrible power which it is so constantly seen to have of destroying family union must be quite sufficient to settle the question. Any person who will take the trouble to inquire into the fact, will find that family affection has been more blighted and destroyed by the workings of this fearful superstition than by any other cause of which the history of man bears record.

The tone of Helen's voice seemed for a moment to recall former feelings, and her mother looked at her kindly: but before she could give utterance to any word of affection, the recollection of all Mr. Cartwright had said to prove that Helen deserved not the affection of her

mother, and that the only chance left to save her soul alive was to be found in the most austere estrangement, till such time as her hard heart should be softened; the recollection of all this came across the terrified mind of Mrs. Mowbray, and she resumed the solemn and distant bearing she had of late assumed, with a nervous sensation of alarm at the great crime she had been on the point of committing.

Poor Helen saw the look, and listened with her whole soul in her eyes for the kind words which had so nearly followed it; but when they came not, her heart sank within her, and pleading fatigue, she begged to be shown to her room, where she spent half the night in weeping.

Most punctually at eleven o'clock on the following morning, Mr. Stephen Corbold was announced, and a stiff priggish-looking figure entered the drawing-room, who, though in truth a "special attorney," looked much more like a thorough-bred methodistical preacher than his friend and cousin Mr. Cartwright. In age he was a few years that gentleman's junior,

but in all outward gifts most lamentably his inferior; being, in truth, as ill-looking and ungentlemanlike a person as any congregation attached to the "Philo-Calvin Frybabe" principles could furnish.

The footman might have announced him in the same words as Lépine did Vadius:

> "Madame, un homme est là, qui veut parler à vous. Il est vêtu de noir, et parle d'un ton doux."

For, excepting his little tight cravat, he appeared to have nothing white about him, and he seldom raised his cautious voice above a whisper.

"I am here, madam," he began, addressing himself to Mrs. Mowbray, who felt rather at a loss what to say to him, "at the request of my cousin, the Reverend William Jacob Cartwright, Vicar of Wrexhill. He hath given me to understand that you have business to transact at Doctors' Commons, relative to the last will and testament of your late husband. Am I correct, madam?

"Quite so, Mr. Corbold. I wish to despatch

this business as quickly as possible, as I am anxious to return again to my family."

"No delay shall intervene that I can prevent," replied the attorney. "Is there any other business, madam, in which my services can be available?"

"You are very kind, sir. I believe there are several things on which I shall have to trouble you. Mr. Mowbray generally transacted his own business, which in London consisted, I believe, solely in receiving dividends and paying tradesmen's bills: the only lawyer he employed, therefore, was a gentleman who resides in our county, and who has hitherto had the care of the estates. But my excellent minister and friend Mr. Cartwright has written upon this sheet of paper, I believe, what it will be necessary for me to do in order to arrange things for the future."

Mrs. Mowbray put the paper into the lawyer's hands, who read it over with great attention, nodding his head slightly from time to time as any item struck him as particularly interesting and important.

"Three per Cents—very good. Bank Stock —very good. Power of attorney.—All right, madam, all right. It hath pleased the Lord to give my cousin, his servant, a clear and comprehending intellect. All shall be done even as it is here set down."

"How long, sir, do you think it will be necessary for me to remain in town?"

"Why, madam, there are many men would run this business out to great length. Here is indeed sufficient to occupy a very active professional man many weeks: but, by the blessing of God, which is often providentially granted to me in time of need, I question not but I may be able to release you in a few days, madam, provided always that you are prepared to meet such expenses as are indispensable upon all occasions when great haste is required."

"Expense will be no object with me, Mr. Corbold; but a prolonged absence from home would be extremely inconvenient. Pray remember that I shall be most happy to pay any additional sum which hastening through the business may require."

"Very good, madam, very good. That the Lord will be good unto me in this business, I cannot presume to doubt; for it hath been consigned unto me by one of God's saints on earth, and it is for the service of a lady who, I am assured by him, is likely to become one of the most favoured agents that the Lord ever selected to do his work on earth."

Mrs. Mowbray coloured from a mixed feeling of modesty and pleasure. That Mr. Cartwright should have thus described her, was most soothing to her heart; but when she recollected how far advanced he was in the favour of God, and how very near the threshold of grace she as yet stood, her diffidence made her shrink from hearing herself named in language so flattering.

"Is that fair young person who left the room soon after I entered it your daughter, madam?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. I rejoice to hear it: that is, I would be understood to say, that I rejoice with an exceeding great joy that the child of a lady who stands in such estimation as you do with

a chosen minister of God's elected church, should wear an aspect so suitable to one who, by the especial providence of God, will be led to follow her ensample."

Mrs. Mowbray sighed.

"I lament, madam," resumed Mr. Corbold, "I may say with great and bitter lamentation, both for your sake, and that of the young person who has left the room, that the London season should be so completely over."

"Sir!" said Mrs. Mowbray in an accent of almost indignant surprise, "is it possible that any friend and relation of Mr. Cartwright's can imagine that I, in my unhappy situation —or indeed, without that, as a Christian woman hoping with fear and trembling to become one of those set apart from worldly things,—is it possible, sir, that you can think I should partake, or let my daughter partake, in the corrupt sinfulness and profane rioting of a London season!"

"May the Lord forgive you for so unjust a suspicion, most respected madam!" cried

Mr. Corbold, clasping his hands and raising his eyes to heaven. "The language of the saints on earth is yet new to you, most excellent and highly-to-be-respected convert of my cousin! The London season of which I speak, and which you will hear alluded to by such of the Lord's sinful creatures as, like me, have reason to believe by an especial manifestation of grace that they are set apart for the service of the Lord,—the London season of which I and they speak, is that when, during about six blessed weeks in the spring, the chosen vessels resort in countless numbers to London, for the purpose of being present at all the meetings which take place during that time, with as much ardour and holy zeal as the worldly-minded show in arranging their fêtes and their fooleries at the instigation of Satan—in anticipation, as it should seem, poor deluded souls! of the crowds that they shall hereafter meet amidst fire and brimstone in his realms below. The season of which I speak, and of which you will hear all the elect speak with rapture and thanks-

giving, consists of a quick succession of splendid and soul-stirring meetings, at which all the saints on whom the favour of the Lord has descended in the gift of speech hold forth in his glory, some for one, some for two, some for three, some for four—ay, some for five hours at a time, sustained, as you may suppose, by a visible resting of the Holy Ghost upon them through the Lord's will. This, madam, is the season that, for your sake, and the sake of the fair young person your daughter, I wished was not yet over."

Mrs. Mowbray made a very penitent and full apology for the blunder she had committed, and very meekly confessed her ignorance, declaring that she had never before heard the epithet of "London season" given to anything so heavenly-minded and sublime as the meetings he described.

The discovery of this species of ignorance on the part of Mrs. Mowbray, which was by no means confined to the instance above mentioned, was a very favourable circumstance for Mr. Corbold. There was, perhaps, no other sub-

ject in the world upon which he was competent to give information (except in the technicalities of his own profession); but in everything relating to missionary meetings, branch-missionary meetings' reports, child's missionary branch committees, London Lord's-day's societies, and the like, he was quite perfect. All this gave him a value in Mrs. Mowbray's eyes as a companion which he might have wanted without it. At all conversations of this kind, Mrs. Mowbray took great care that Helen should be present, persuaded that nothing could be so likely to give her that savour of righteousness in which, as yet, she was so greatly deficient.

The consequence of this arrangement was twofold. On Helen's side, it generated a feeling compounded of contempt and loathing towards the regenerated attorney, which in most others would have led to the passion called hatred; but in her it seemed rather a passive than an active sentiment, which would never have sought either nourishment or relief in doing injury to its object, but which ren-

dered her so ill at ease in his presence that her life became perfectly wretched from the frequency of it.

On the part of the gentleman, the effect of these frequent interviews was different. From thinking Mrs. Mowbray's daughter a very fair young person, he grew by gradual, but pretty rapid degrees, to perceive that she was the very loveliest tabernacle in which the Lord had ever enshrined the spirit of a woman; and by the time Mrs. Mowbray had learned by rote the names, titles, connexions, separations, unions, deputations, and endowments of all the missionary societies, root and branch, and of all the central and eccentric evangelical establishments for the instruction of ignorance in infants of four months to adults of fourscore, Mr. Stephen Corbold had made up his mind to believe that, by fair means or foul, it was his bounden duty, as a pious man and serious Christian, to appropriate the fair Helen to himself in this life, and thereby ensure her everlasting glory in the life to come.

It must not be supposed that while these

things passed in London the Vicar of Wrexhill was forgotten. Mrs. Mowbray's heart and conscience both told her that such a letter as she had received from him must not remain unanswered: she therefore placed Helen in the drawing-room, with a small but very closely-printed volume on "Free Grace," recommended by Mr. Corbold, and having desired her, in the voice of command, to study it attentively till dinner-time, she retired to her own room, where, having knelt, wept, prayed, written, and erased, for about three hours, she finally signed and sealed an epistle, of which it is unnecessary to say more than that it conveyed a very animated feeling of satisfaction to the heart of the holy man to whom it was addressed.

CHAPTER V.

MR. STEPHEN CORBOLD RETURNS WITH MRS. MOWBRAY AND HELEN TO WREXHILL.

Mrs. Mowbray's business in London, simple and straightforward as it was, might probably under existing circumstances have occupied many weeks, had not a lucky thought which visited the restless couch of Mr. Stephen Corbold been the means of bringing it to a speedy conclusion.

"*Soyez amant, et vous serez inventif,*" is a pithy proverb, and has held good in many an illustrious instance, but in none, perhaps, more conspicuously than in that of Mr. Stephen Corbold's passion for Miss Mowbray. One of the earliest proofs he gave of this, was the persuading Mrs. Mowbray that the only way in which he could, consistently with his other

engagements, devote to her as much time as her affairs required, would be, by passing every evening with her. And he did pass every evening with her: and poor Helen was given to understand, in good set terms, that if she presumed to retire before that excellent man Mr. Stephen Corbold had finished his last tumbler of soda-water and Madeira, not only would she incur her mother's serious displeasure, but be confided (during their absence from Mowbray) to the spiritual instruction of some *earnest* minister, who would teach her in what the duty of a daughter consisted."

And so Helen Mowbray sat till twelve o'clock every night, listening to the works of the saints of the nineteenth century, and exposed to the unmitigated stare of Mr. Stephen Corbold's grey eyes.

The constituting himself the guide and protector of the ladies through a series of extemporary preachings and lecturings on Sunday, was perhaps too obvious a duty to be classed as one of love's invention; but the ingenuity shown in persuading Mrs. Mowbray that it

would be necessary for the completion of her business that he should attend her home, most certainly deserves this honour.

Though no way wanting in that quality of mind which the invidious denominate "impudence," and the judicious "proper confidence," —a quality as necessary to the fitting out of Mr. Stephen Corbold as parchment and red tape,—he nevertheless felt some slight approach to hesitation and shame-facedness when he first hinted the expediency of this measure. But his embarrassment was instantly relieved by Mrs. Mowbray's cordial assurance that she rejoiced to hear such a manner of concluding the business was possible, as she knew it would give their "excellent minister" pleasure to see his cousin.

There is no Christian virtue, perhaps, to which a serious widow lady is so often called (unless she belong to that class invited by the "exemplary" in bevies, by way of charity, when a little teapot is set between every two of them,)—there is no Christian virtue more constantly inculcated on the minds of *rich* serious

widows than that of hospitality; nor is there a text that has been quoted oftener to such, or with greater variety of accent, as admonitory, encouragingly, beseechingly, approvingly, jeremiadingly in reproach, and hallelujahingly in gratitude and admiration, than those three impressive and laudatory words of Saint Paul,—

"GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY!"

During a snug little morning visit at the Park, at which only Mrs. Mowbray and Fanny were present, Mr. Cartwright accidentally turned to these words; and nothing could be more touchingly eloquent than the manner in which he dwelt upon and explained them.

From that hour good Mrs. Mowbray had been secretly lamenting the want of sufficient opportunity to show how fully she understood and valued this Christian virtue, and how willing she was to put it in practice toward all such as her "excellent minister" should approve: it was, therefore, positively with an outpouring of fervent zeal that she welcomed the prospect of a visit from *such a man* as Mr. Stephen Corbold.

"It is indeed a blessing and a happiness, Mr. Corbold," said she, "that what I feared would detain me many days from my home and my family should, by God's providence, be converted into such a merciful dispensation as I must consider your coming to be. When shall you be able to set out, my dear sir?"

"I could set out to-morrow, or, at the very latest, the day after, if I could obtain a conveyance that I should deem perfectly safe for the papers I have to carry."

Helen shuddered, for she saw his meaning lurking in the corner of his eye as he turned towards her one of his detested glances.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Mowbray, hesitatingly, and fearful that she might be taxing his great good-nature too far,—"perhaps, upon such an urgent occasion, you might have the great goodness, Mr. Corbold, to submit to making a third in my travelling-carriage?"

"My gratitude would indeed be very great for such a permission," he replied, endeavouring to betray as little pleasure as possible. "I do assure you, my dear lady, such precautions

are far from unnecessary. The Lord, for his own especial purposes, which are to us inscrutable, ordains that his tender care to usward shall be shown rather by giving us prudence and forethought to avoid contact with the wicked, than by any removal of them, by his holy intervention, from our path: wherefore I hold myself bound in righteousness to confess that the papers concerning your affairs—even yours, my honoured lady,—might run a very fearful risk of being abducted, and purloined, by some of the many ungodly persons with whom no dispensation of Providence hath yet interfered to prevent their jostling his own people when they travel, as sometimes unhappily they must do, in stage-coaches."

"Ah, Mr. Corbold!" replied the widow, (mentally alluding to a conversation which she had held with Mr. Cartwright on the separation to be desired between the chosen and the not-chosen even in this world; such being, as he said, a sort of type or foreshowing of that eternal separation promised in the world to come;)—"Ah, Mr. Corbold! if I had the power

to prevent it, no chosen servants of the Lord should ever again find themselves obliged to submit to such promiscuous mixture with the ungodly as this unsanctified mode of travelling must lead to. Had I power and influence sufficient to carry such an undertaking into effect, I would certainly endeavour to institute a society of Christians, who, by liberal subscriptions among themselves, might collect a fund for defraying the travelling expenses of those who are set apart for salvation. It must be an abomination in the eyes of the Lord, Mr. Corbold, that such should be seen travelling on earth by the same vehicles as those which convey the wretched beings who are on their sure and certain road to eternal destruction!"

"Ah, dearest madam!" replied the attorney, with a profound sigh, "such thoughts as those are buds of holiness that shall burst forth into full-blown flowers of eternal glory round your head in heaven! But, alas! no such society is yet formed, and the sufferings of the righteous, for the want of it, are truly great!"

"I am sure they must be, Mr. Corbold,"

replied the kind Mrs. Mowbray in an accent of sincere compassion; "but, at least in the present instance, you may be spared such unseemly mixture, if you will be good enough not to object to travelling three in the carriage. Helen is very slight, and I trust you will not be greatly incommoded."

Mr. Corbold's gratitude was too great to be expressed in a sitting attitude; he therefore rose from his chair, and pressing his extended hands together as if invoking a blessing on the meek lady's holy head, he uttered, "God reward you, madam, for not forgetting those whom the Lord hath remembered!" and as he spoke, he bowed his head low, long, and reverently. As he recovered the erect position on ordinary occasions permitted to man, he turned a little round to give a glance of very lover-like timidity towards Helen, who when he began his reverence to her mother was in the room; but as he now turned his disappointed eyes all round it, he discovered that she was there no longer.

After this, the business which could, as Mr.

Corbold said, be conveniently transacted in London, was quickly despatched, and the day fixed for their return to Mowbray, exactly one week after they left it.

Mr. Stephen Corbold was invited to breakfast previous to the departure; and he came accompanied by so huge a green bag, as promised a long stay among those to whose affairs the voluminous contents related.

When all things in and about the carriage were ready, Mr. Stephen Corbold presented his arm to the widow, and placed her in it. He then turned to Helen, who on this occasion found it not so easy as at setting off to avoid the hand extended towards her; that is to say, she could not spring by it unheeded: but as she would greatly have preferred the touch of any other reptile, she contrived to be very awkward, and actually caught hold of the handle beside the carriage-door, instead of the obsequious ungloved fingers which made her shudder as she glanced her eyes towards them.

"You will sit in the middle, Helen," said Mrs. Mowbray.

"I wish, mamma, you would be so kind as to let me sit in the dickey," replied the young lady, looking up as she spoke to the very comfortable and unoccupied seat in front of the carriage, which, but for Mrs. Mowbray's respectful religious scruples, might certainly have accommodated Mr. Corbold and his bag perfectly well. "I should like it so much better, mamma!"

"Let me sit in the middle, I entreat!" cried Mr. Corbold, entering the carriage in haste, to prevent farther discussion. "My dear young lady," he continued, placing his person in the least graceful of all imaginable attitudes,—"my dear young lady, I beseech you——"

"Go into the corner, Helen!" said Mrs. Mowbray hastily, wishing to put so exemplary a Christian more at his ease, and without thinking it necessary to answer the insidious petition of her daughter, which, as she thought, plainly pointed at the exclusion of the righteous attorney.

Helen ventured not to repeat it, and the carriage drove off. For the first mile Mr. Ste-

phen Corbold sat, or rather perched himself, at the extremest edge of the seat, his hat between his knees, and every muscle that ought to have been at rest in active exercise, to prevent his falling forward on his nose; every feature, meanwhile, seeming to say, "This is not my carriage." But by gentle degrees he slid farther and farther backwards, till his spare person was not only in the enjoyment of ease, but of great happiness also.

Helen, as her mother observed, was "very slight," and Mr. Corbold began almost to fancy that she would at last vanish into thin air, for, as he quietly advanced, so did she quietly retreat, till she certainly did appear to shrink into a very small compass indeed.

"I fear I crowd you, my dearest lady!" he said, addressing Mrs. Mowbray at least ten times during as many miles; and every time this fear came over him he gave her a little more room, dreadfully to the annoyance of the slight young lady on the other side of him. Poor Helen had need to remember that she was going home—going to Rosalind, to enable

her to endure the disgust of her position; but for several hours she did bear it heroically. She thought of Mowbray,—of her flower-garden,—of the beautiful Park,—of Rosalind's snug dressing-room, and the contrast of all this to the life she had led in London. She thought too of Oakley, and of the possibility that some of the family might, by some accident or other, be met in some of the walks which Rosalind and she would be sure to take. In short, with her eyes incessantly turned through the open window towards the hedges and ditches, the fields and the flowers by the road-side, she contrived to keep herself, body and soul, as far as possible from the hated being who sat beside her.

On the journey to London, Mrs. Mowbray had not thought it necessary to stop for dinner on the road, both she and Helen preferring to take a sandwich in the carriage; but the fear of infringing any of the duties of that hospitality which she now held in such high veneration, she arranged matters differently, and learning, upon consulting her footman, that an excellent

house was situated about half-way between London and Wrexhill, she not only determined upon stopping there, but directed the man to send forward a note, ordering an early dinner to be ready for them.

This halt was an agreeable surprise to Mr. Stephen Corbold. It was indeed an arrangement such as those of his peculiar sect are generally found to approve; for it is a remarkable fact, easily ascertained by any who will give themselves the trouble of inquiry, that the serious Christians of the present age indulge themselves bodily, whenever the power of doing so falls in their way, exactly in proportion to the mortifications and privations with which they torment their spirits: so that while a young sinner would fly from an untasted glass of claret that he might not lose the prologue to a new play, a young saint would sip up half-a-dozen (if he could get them) while descanting on the grievous pains of hell which the pursuit of pleasure must for ever bring.

The repast, and even the wine, did honour

to the recommendation of the careful and experienced Thomas: and Mrs. Mowbray had the sincere satisfaction of seeing Mr. Corbold ("*le pauvre homme!*") eat half a pound of salmon, one-third of a leg of lamb, and three-quarters of a large pigeon-pie, with a degree of relish that proved to her that she was "very right to stop for dinner!"

Nothing can show gratitude for such little attentions as these so pleasantly and so effectually as taking full advantage of them. Mr. Corbold indeed carried this feeling so far, that even after the two ladies had left the room, he stepped back and pretty nearly emptied the two decanters of wine before he rejoined them.

The latter part of the journey produced a very disagreeable scene, which, though it ended, as Helen thought at the time, most delightfully for her, was productive in its consequences of many a bitter heart-ache.

It is probable that the good cheer at D——, together with the final libation that washed it down, conveyed more than ordinary animation

to the animal spirits of the attorney, and for some miles he discoursed with more than his usual unction on the sins of the sinful, and the holiness of the holy, till poor dear Mrs. Mowbray, despite her vehement struggles to keep her eyes open, fell fast asleep.

No sooner was Mr. Stephen Corbold fully aware of this fact, than he began making some very tender speeches to Helen. For some time her only reply was expressed by thrusting her head still farther out of the side window. But this did not avail her long. As if to intimate to her that a person whose attention could not be obtained through the medium of the ears must be roused from their apathy by the touch, he took her hand.

Upon this she turned as suddenly as if an adder had stung her, and fixing her eyes, beaming with rage and indignation, upon him, said,

"If you venture, sir, to repeat this insult, I will call to the postilions to stop, and order the footman instantly to take you out of the carriage."

He returned her glance, however, rather with passion than repentance, and audaciously putting his arm round her waist, drew her towards him, while he whispered in her ear, "What would your dear good mamma say to that?"

Had he possessed the cunning of Mephistophiles, he could not have uttered words more calculated to unnerve her. The terrible conviction that it was indeed possible her mother might justify, excuse, or, at any rate pardon the action, came upon her heart like ice, and burying her face in her hands, she burst into tears.

Had Mr. Stephen Corbold been a wise man, he would have here ceased his persecution: he saw that she was humbled to the dust by the reference he had so skilfully made to her mother, and perhaps, had he emptied only one decanter, he might have decided that it would be desirable to leave her in that state of mind. But, as it was, he had the very exceeding audacity once more to put his arm round her, and by a sudden and most un-

expected movement, impressed a kiss upon her cheek.

Helen uttered a piercing scream; and Mrs. Mowbray, opening her eyes, demanded in a voice of alarm, "What is the matter?"

Mr. Corbold sat profoundly silent; but Helen answered in great agitation, "I can remain in the carriage no longer, mamma, unless you turn out this man!"

"Oh, Helen! Helen! what can you mean by using such language?" answered her mother. "It is pride, I know, abominable pride,—I have seen it from the very first,—which leads you to treat this excellent man as you do. Do you forget that he is the relation as well as the friend of our minister? Fie upon it, Helen! you must bring down this haughty spirit to something more approaching meek Christian humility, or you and I shall never be able to live together."

It seems almost like a paradox, and yet it is perfectly true, that had not Mrs. Mowbray from *the very first*, as she said, perceived the utter vulgarity, in person, language, and de-

meanour, of the vicar's cousin, she would have been greatly less observant and punctilious in her civilities towards him; nor would she have been so fatally ready to quarrel with her daughter for testifying her dislike of a man who, her own taste told her, would be detestable, were not the holiness of his principles such as to redeem every defect with which nature, education, and habit had afflicted him.

The more Mrs. Mowbray felt disposed to shrink from an intimate association with the serious attorney, the more strenuously did she force her nature to endure him; and feeling, almost unconsciously perhaps,—that it was impossible Helen should not detest him, she put all her power and authority in action, not only to prevent her showing it, but to prevent also so very sinful and worldly-minded a sentiment from taking hold upon her young mind.

Helen, however, was too much irritated at this moment to submit, as she had been ever used to do, to the commands of her mother;

and still feeling the pressure of the serious attorney's person against her own, she let down the front glass, and very resolutely called to the postilions to stop.

The boy who rode the wheeler immediately heard and obeyed her.

"Tell the servant to open the door," said she with a firmness and decision which she afterwards recalled to herself with astonishment.

Thomas, who the moment the carriage stopped had got down, obeyed the call she now addressed to him,—opened the door, gave her his arm; and before either Mrs. Mowbray, or the serious attorney either, had fully recovered from their astonishment, Helen was comfortably seated on the dickey, enjoying the cool breeze of a delicious afternoon upon her flushed cheek.

The turn which was given to this transaction by Mr. Stephen Corbold during the tête-à-tête conversation he enjoyed for the rest of the journey with the young lady's mother, was such as to do credit to his acuteness;

and that good lady's part in it showed plainly that the new doctrines she had so rapidly imbibed, while pretending to purify her heart, had most lamentably perverted her judgment.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RETURN.

On reaching Mowbray, the first figure which greeted the eyes of the travellers was that of Charles, stationed on the portico steps waiting to receive them. A line from Helen to Rosalind, written only the day before, announced their intended return; but the appearance of Charles was a surprise to them, and to Helen certainly the most delightful that she could have experienced.

Mr. Cartwright had written a long and very edifying letter to Mrs. Mowbray, informing her of the unexpected arrival of her son from the scene of his studies, and making such comments upon it as in his wisdom seemed good. But though this too was written in the secret recesses of his own chamber, with many affecting

little circumstances demonstrative of his holy and gentle emotions while so employed, it was nevertheless, under the influence of still riper wisdom, subsequently destroyed, because he thought that the first surprise occasioned by the young man's unwonted appearance would be more likely to produce the effect he desired than even his statement.

Neither Rosalind nor Charles himself had written, because they were both unwilling to state the real cause of his coming, and thought the plea of *whim* would pass off better in conversation than on paper. That Fanny should write nothing which good Mr. Cartwright did not wish known, can be matter of surprise to no one.

Helen, who had descried Charles before the carriage stopped, descended from her lofty position with dangerous rapidity, and sprang into his arms with a degree of delight greater, perhaps, than she had ever before felt at seeing him.

The exclamation of Mrs. Mowbray certainly had in it, as the wise vicar predicted, a tone

that indicated displeasure as well as surprise; and the embrace, which she could not refuse, was so much less cordial than it was wont to be, that he turned again to Helen, and once more pressed her to his heart, as if to console him for the want of tenderness in his mother's kiss.

Meanwhile, Mr. Stephen Corbold stood under the lofty portico, lost in admiration at the splendid appearance of the house and grounds. Mrs. Mowbray, with a sort of instinctive feeling that this excellent person might not altogether find himself at his ease with her family, hastened towards him, determined that her own Christian humility should at least set them a good example, and putting out both her hands towards him, exclaimed with an earnestness that sounded almost like the voice of prayer,

"Welcome, *dear*, DEAR, Mr. Corbold, to my house and home! and may you find in it the comfort and hospitality your exemplary character deserves!" Then turning to her son, she added, "I know not how long you are likely to stay away from college, Charles; but

while you are here, I beg that you will exert yourself to the very utmost to make Mowbray agreeable to this gentleman; and remember, if you please, that his religious principles, and truly edifying Christian sentiments, are exactly such as I would wish to place before you as an example."

Charles turned round towards the serious attorney, intending to welcome him by an extended hand; but the thing was impossible. There was that in his aspect with which he felt that he could never hold fellowship, and his salutation was turned into a ceremonious bow; a change which it was the less difficult to make, from the respectful distance at which the stranger guest placed himself, while preparing to receive the young man's welcome.

Though Rosalind had purposely remained in her own apartment till the first meeting with Charles was over, Helen was already in her arms; having exchanged a hasty kiss with Fanny, whom she met in the hall, hastening to receive her mother.

"Oh! my dearest Rosalind! How thank-

ful am I to be once more with you again! I never, I think, shall be able to endure the sight of London again as long as I live. I have been so very, very wretched there!"

"Upon my word, Helen, I have not lived upon roses since you went. You can hardly be so glad to come back, as I am to have you. What did your mother say on seeing Charles?"

"I hardly know. She did not, I think, seem pleased to see him: but I am more delighted at the chance that has brought him, let it be what it will, than I have words to express. Oh! it is such a blessing to me!—dear, dear, Charles! he knows not what a treasure he is. The very sight of him has cured all my sorrows—and yet I was dreadfully miserable just now."

"Then, thank God! he is here, my own Helen! But tell me, dearest, what is it has made you miserable? Though you tell me it is over, the tears seemed ready to start when you said so."

"Oh! my woes will make a long story,

Rosalind; and some of them must be for your ear only; but this shall be at night, when nobody is near to hear us:—but, by the way, you must have a great deal to tell me. How comes it that Charles is here? And, what seems stranger still, how comes it that, as he *is* here, you have not been living upon roses?"

"My woes may make a story as well as yours, Helen; and a long one too, if I tell all: but it must come out by degrees,—a series of sketches, rather than an history."

"Have you seen anybody from Oakley, Rosalind?"

"Ah, Helen!" said Rosalind smiling, as she watched the bright colour mounting even to the brows of her friend; "your history, then, has had nothing in it to prevent your remembering Oakley?"

"My history, as you call it, Rosalind, has been made up of a series of mortifications: some of them have almost broken my heart, and my spirit too; but others have irritated me into a degree of courage and daring that might perhaps have surprised you; and every-

thing that has happened to me, has sent my thoughts back to my home and to my friends, —all my friends, Rosalind,—with a degree of clinging and dependent affection such as I never felt before."

"My poor Helen! But look up, dearest! and shed no tears if you can help it. We all seem to be placed in a very singular and unexpected position, my dear friend; but it is not tears that will help us out of it. This new man, this vicar, seems inclined to go such lengths with his fanatical hypocrisy, that I have good hopes your mother and Fanny will ere long get sick of him and his new lights, and then all will go right again. Depend upon it, all that has hitherto gone wrong, has been wholly owing to him. I certainly do not think that your poor father's will was made in the spirit of wisdom; but even *that* would have produced none of the effects it has done, had not this hateful man instilled, within ten minutes after the will was read, the poison of doubt and suspicion against Charles, into the mind of your mother. Do you not remember

his voice and his look, Helen, when he entered the room where we were all three sitting with your mother? I am sure I shall never forget him! I saw, in an instant, that he intended to make your mother believe that Charles resented the will; and that, instead of coming himself, he had sent him to your mother to tell her of it. I hated him then; and every hour that has passed since, has made me hate him more. But let us take hope, Helen, even from the excess of the evil. Your mother cannot long remain blind to his real character; and, when once she sees him as he is, she will again become the dear kind mother you have all so fondly loved."

"Could I hope this, Rosalind, for the future, there is nothing I could not endure patiently for the present,—at least, nothing that could possibly happen while Charles is here; but I do not hope it."

There was a melancholy earnestness in Helen's voice, as she pronounced the last words, that sounded like a heavy prophecy of evil to come, in the ears of Rosalind. "God help us, then!"

she exclaimed. "If we are really to live under the influence and authority of the Vicar of Wrexhill, our fate will be dreadful. If your dear father had but been spared to us a few years longer,—if you and I were but one-and-twenty, Helen,—how different would be the light in which I should view all that now alarms us; my fortune would be plenty for both of us, and I would take you with me to Ireland, and we would live with——"

"Oh Rosalind! how can you talk so idly? Do you think that anything would make me leave my poor dear mother?"

"If you were to marry, for instance?"

"I should never do that without her consent; and that, you know, would hardly be leaving her."

"Well! 'God and our innocency defend and guard us!' for I do think, Helen, we are in a position that threatens vexation, to say the least of it. I wonder if Miss Cartwright's visit is to end with your absence? She is the very oddest personage! sometimes I pity her; sometimes I almost admire her; sometimes I

feel afraid of her, but never by any chance can I continue even to fancy that I understand her character."

"Indeed! Yet in general you set about that rather rapidly, Rosalind. But must we not go down? I have hardly seen Fanny, and I long to talk a little to my own dear Charles."

"And you will like to have some tea after your journey. Mrs. Mowbray, I think, never stops *en route?*"

"In general she does not; but to-day——" a shudder ran through Helen's limbs as she remembered the travelling adventures of the day, and she stopped.

"You look tired and pale, Helen! Come down, take some tea, and then go to bed directly. If we do not act with promptitude and decision in this matter, we shall sit up talking all night."

As they passed Miss Cartwright's door, Rosalind knocked, and that young lady immediately opened it.

"Oh! you *are* come back then? I fancied,

by Mr. Cartwright's not coming this evening, that something might have occurred to prevent you?"

"If it had," said Helen, smiling, "it must have been announced by express, for you can only have had my letter this morning."

"True!" replied Miss Cartwright.

When the three young ladies entered the drawing-room, they found nobody in it but Mr. Stephen Corbold; Mrs. Mowbray having gone with Fanny to her own room, and Charles ensconced himself in the library, to avoid a tête-à-tête with the unpromising-looking stranger.

Rosalind gave him a glance, and then looked at Helen with an eye that seemed to say, "Who in the world have you brought us?" Helen, however, gave no glance of intelligence in return; but, walking to a table which stood in that part of the room which was at the greatest distance from the place occupied by Mr. Corbold, she sat down, and began earnestly reading an old newspaper that she found upon it.

Miss Cartwright started on recognising her cousin, and though she condescended to pronounce, "How do you do, Mr. Corbold?" there was but a cold welcome to him expressed either by her voice or manner. No one presented him to Rosalind, and altogether he felt as little at his ease as it was well possible for a gentleman to do, when the door opened, and Mrs. Mowbray and Fanny appeared. From that moment he became as much distinguished as he was before overlooked. Fanny, who knew that it was Mr. Cartwright's cousin who stood bowing to her, delighted at the honour of being told that she was "Miss Fanny Mowbray," received him with a kindness and condescension which soothed her own feelings as much as his, for she felt that every word she spoke to him was a proof of her devotion to her dear, good Mr. Cartwright! and that, when he heard of it, he could not fail to understand that it was for his sake.

The party retired early, ostensibly for the sake of the travellers; but perhaps the real cause of this general haste to separate, was,

that they all felt themselves singularly embarrassed in each other's company. Before Mrs. Mowbray had been five minutes in her house, she had ordered a splendid sleeping apartment to be made ready for Mr. Corbold; and the first half-hour after retiring to it, was spent by him in taking an accurate survey of its furniture, fittings-up, and dimensions: after which, he very nearly stifled himself (forgetful of the dog-days) by striving to enjoy the full luxury of the abounding pillows with which his magnificent couch was furnished.

Mrs. Mowbray and Fanny separated after a short but confidential colloquy. Miss Cartwright took her solitary way to her chamber, where, as the housemaids asserted, she certainly spent half the night in reading, or writing, or something or other, before she put out her light: and Rosalind and Helen, spite of their good resolutions, not only sat up talking in the library themselves, but permitted Charles to share their watch with them; so that, before they separated, every fact, thought, or opinion, treasured in the minds of each, were most un-

reservedly communicated to the others,—excepting that Helen did not disclose at full length *all* the reasons she had for detesting Mr. Corbold, and Charles did not think it necessary to mention, that Rosalind grew fairer to his eyes, and dearer to his heart, every hour.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VICAR AND HIS COUSIN.

None of the Mowbray family were present at the meeting between the Vicar of Wrexhill and his cousin. The latter, indeed, set out from the Park at a very early hour on the morning after his arrival, in order to breakfast with his much esteemed relation, and to enjoy in the privacy of his Vicarage a little friendly and confidential conversation as to the projects and intentions concerning him, which had been hinted at in his letters.

He was welcomed by Mr. Cartwright with very obliging civility; not but that the vicar felt and showed, upon this, as well as all other occasions, a very proper consciousness of his own superiority in all ways. However, the

Corbold connexion had been very essentially useful to him in days past; and Mr. Stephen, the present representative of the family, might *possibly* be extremely useful to him in days to come. Several fresh-laid eggs were therefore placed on the table,—coffee was added to tea,—and his reception in all ways such as to make Mr. Stephen feel himself extremely comfortable.

When the repast was ended, Mr. Jacob received a hint to withdraw; and, as soon as the door was closed behind him, the serious vicar approached his chair to that of the serious attorney, with the air of one who had much to hear, and much to communicate.

"You seem hereunto, cousin Stephen, to have managed this excellent business, which by God's providence I have been enabled to put into your hands, with great ability; and, by a continuation of mercy, I am not without hope, that you will, as I heretofore hinted, bring the same to good effect."

"There is hope, great and exceeding merciful hope, cousin William, that all you have

anticipated, and peradventure more too, may come to pass. A blessing and a providence seem already to have lighted upon you, cousin, in your new ministry; for into this vessel which the Lord and your cousinly kindness have set within my sight, you have poured grace and abounding righteousness. Surely there never was a lady endowed with such goodly gifts, who was more disposed to make a free-will offering of them to the Lord and to his saints, than this pious and in all ways exemplary widow."

"Your remarks, cousin, are those of a man on whom the light shines. May the mercy of the Lord strengthen unto you, for his glory, the talent he has bestowed! And now, with the freedom of kinsmen who speak together, tell to me what are the hopes and expectations to which your conversation with this excellent, and already very serious lady, have given birth?"

"I have no wish or intention, cousin William, of hiding from you any portion of the thoughts which it has pleased the Lord to

send into my heart; the which are in fact, for the most part, founded upon the suggestions which, by the light of truth, and the aid of the Holy Spirit, that suffereth not his own to stumble in darkness, I discerned in the first letter upon the widow Mowbray's affairs which you addressed unto me."

"Respecting the agency of her own business, and peradventure that of her ward's also?"

"Even so. I have, in truth, well-founded faith and hope that by the continuation of your friendship and good report, cousin William, I may at no distant period attain unto both."

"And if you do, cousin Stephen," returned the vicar, with a smile; "your *benefice* in the parish of Wrexhill will be worth considerably more than mine."

A serious, waggish, holy, cunning smile now illuminated the red, dry features of the attorney, and, shaking his head with a Burleigh-like pregnancy of meaning, he said, "Ah, cousin!"

The vicar smiled again, and, rising from his chair, put his head and shoulders out of the open window, looking carefully, as it seemed, in all directions; then, drawing them in again, he proceeded to open the door of the room, and examined the passage leading to it in the same cautious manner.

"My son Jacob is one of the finest young men in Europe, cousin Stephen," said the vicar, reseating himself; "but he is young, and as full of little childish innocent fooleries as any baby: so it is as well not to speak all we may have to say, without knowing that we are alone; for many an excellent plan, in which Providence seemed to have taken a great share, has been impiously spoiled, frustrated, and destroyed, by the want of caution in those to whom the Lord intrusted it. Let not such sin lie at our door! Now tell me then, cousin Stephen, and tell me frankly, why did you smile and say, 'Ah, cousin?'"

"Because, while speaking of what, by God's mercy, I may get at Wrexhill, it seemed to

me like a misdoubting of Providence not to speak a little hint of what God's chosen minister there may get too"

"I get my vicar's dues, cousin Stephen; and it may be, by the blessing of God upon my humble endeavours, I may, when next Easter falls, obtain some trifle both from high and low in the way of Easter offering."

"Ah, cousin!" repeated the attorney, renewing his intelligent smile.

"Well then," said the well-pleased vicar, "speak out."

"I am but a plodding man of business, replied Mr. Corbold, "with such illumination of the spirit upon matters of faith as the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to bestow; but my sense, such as it is, tells me that the excellent and pious widow of Mowbray Park will not always be permitted by the Lord to remain desolate."

"She does, in truth, deserve a better fate," rejoined the vicar.

"And what better fate can befall her, cousin

William, than being bound together in holy matrimony with one of the most shining lights to be found among God's saints on earth?"

"Yes!" responded the vicar with a sigh; "that is the fate she merits, and that is the fate she ought to meet!"

"And shall we doubt the Lord?—shall we doubt that a mate shall be found for her? No, cousin William; doubt not, for I say unto thee, 'Thou art the man!'"

The vicar endeavoured to look solemn; but, though his handsome features were in general under excellent control, he could not at this moment repress a pleasant sort of simpering smile that puckered round his mouth. Mr. Stephen Corbold, perceiving that his cousin was in nowise displeased by the prophecy he had taken the liberty to utter, returned to the subject again, saying,

"I wish you had seen her face,—she must have been very like her daughter,—I wish you could have seen her, cousin William, every time I named you!"

"Indeed! Did she really testify some emo-

tion? I trust you are not jesting, cousin Stephen; this is no subject for pleasantry."

"Most assuredly it is not! and I think that you must altogether have forgotten my temper and character, if you suppose that I should think it such. To tell you the truth, cousin, I look upon the time present as a period marked and settled by the providence of the Lord, for the calling you, his anointed, up to the high places. Will it not be a glory for his name, to have his minister and servant placed in such a palace as Mowbray? and will it not be converting what hitherto has doubtless been the abode of sinners, into a temple for the people of the Lord?"

"I will not deny," replied the vicar, "that such thoughts have occasionally found place in my own mind. There have already been some very singular and remarkable manifestations of the Lord's will in this matter; and it is the perceiving this, which has led me to believe, and indeed feel certain, that my duty calls upon me so to act, that this wealthy relict of a man too much addicted to the things

of this world, may finally, by becoming part and parcel of myself, lose not the things eternal."

"I greatly rejoice," rejoined Mr. Corbold, "that such is your decision in this matter; and if it should so fall out that the Lord in his wisdom and goodness shall ordain you to become the master of Mowbray Park, (at these words the vicar cast his eyes upon the ground and meekly bowed his head,) and I have a persuasion that he will so ordain, borne strongly in upon my mind, then and in that case, cousin William, I trust that your patronage and support will not be withdrawn from me."

"Cousin Stephen," replied the vicar, "you are a man that on many occasions I shall covet and desire to have by me and near me, both for your profit and advantage and my own; but in the case which you have put, and which the Lord seems to have whispered to your soul—in the case, Stephen, that I should ever become the master and owner of Mowbray, and all the sundry properties thereunto belonging, I

think—no offence to you, cousin—that I should prefer managing the estates myself."

The serious attorney looked somewhat crest-fallen, and perhaps some such questionings were borne in upon his mind as—"What is it to me if he marries the widow, if I do not get the management of the estates?"

When the vicar raised his eyes to the face of his cousin, he probably perceived the impression his words had produced, and kindly anxious to restore him to more comfortable feelings, he added,—"The fine property of Miss Torrington, cousin Stephen, might certainly be placed entirely in your hands—the management of it I mean—till she comes of age; but then, if she marries my son, which I think not unlikely, it is probable that Jacob may follow my example, and prefer taking care of the property himself."

"Then, at the very best," replied Mr. Corbold, "I can only hope to obtain an agency for a year or two?"

"I beg your pardon, cousin; my hopes for

you go much farther than that. In the first place, I would recommend it to you, immediately to settle yourself at Wrexhill: I am told that there is a good deal of business up and down the country hereabouts; and, if I obtain the influence that I hope to do in more ways than one, I shall take care that no attorney is employed but yourself, cousin Stephen. Besides this, I know that there may happen to be settlements or wills wanting amongst us, my good friend, which may make your being at hand very convenient; and, in all such cases, you would do your work, you know, pretty much at your own price. All this, however, is only contingent, I am quite aware of that; and therefore, in order that you may in some sort share my good fortune,—if such indeed should fall upon me,—I have been thinking, cousin Stephen, that when I shall be married to this lady, whom it has pleased Providence to place in my path, you, being then the near relative of a person of consequence and high consideration in the county, may also aspire to increase your means

by the same holy ordinance; and, if such a measure should seem good to your judgment, I have a lady in my eye,—also a widow, and a very charming one, my dear friend,—who lives in a style that shows her to be favoured by Providence with the goods of fortune. What say you to this, cousin Stephen?"

"Why, it is borne in upon me to say, cousin William, that, in such a case as this, I should be inclined to follow your good example, and choose for myself. And, truth to speak, I believe the choice is in some sort made already; and I don't see but your marriage may be as likely to help me in this case as in the other; and as to fortune, it is probable that you may be able to lend me a helping hand there, too; for the young lady, I fancy, is no other than your own daughter-in-law that is to be,—the pretty Miss Helen, cousin William?"

The vicar, as he listened to these words, very nearly uttered a whistle. He was, however, as he whispered to himself, mercifully saved from such an indecorum by the timely

remembrance that his cousin, though an attorney, was a very serious man; but, though he did not whistle, he deemed it necessary to express in a more solemn and proper manner his doubts of the success to be hoped from the scheme proposed by Mr. Corbold.

"As to the fortune of the young person who may, as you observe, some day by the blessing of Providence become my daughter-in-law, I must tell you as a friend and kinsman, cousin Stephen, that I hold it to be very doubtful if she ever have any fortune at all. Are you aware that she is not regenerate?"

"I partly guess as much," replied the attorney. "But," he added with a smile, "I can't say I should have any objection to marrying her first, and leading her into the way of salvation afterwards. And when I can testify to her having forsaken the errors of her ways, and that I have made her a light to lighten the Gentiles; I suppose you won't object *then* to her coming in for a share of her mother's inheritance?"

"That would certainly make a difference;

but I won't disguise from you, cousin, that I consider this young person's as a hopeless case. She was foredoomed from the beginning of the world: I see the mark upon her. However, that might not perhaps make such difference in your determination, for I know you to be a man very steadfast in hope, cousin Stephen. But there is, moreover, I think, another obstacle. You must not take my frankness amiss; but I have an inward misgiving as to her being willing to accept you."

"As the young lady is a minor, cousin William, I should count upon its being in your power to make her marry pretty well whom you please. And this you may rely upon, that, in case you favour me heartily in this matter, there is no work of any kind that you could put me to, that I should not think it my bounden duty to perform."

"You speak like a just and conscientious man, cousin Corbold; and, by the blessing of the Lord upon us, I trust that we shall be so able to work together for righteousness' sake, that in the end we may compass that which

we desire. Nevertheless, I confess that it is still borne in upon me that the fair and excellent widow Simpson would be the wisest choice for you."

"Should it please the Lord that such should be my own opinion hereafter, cousin Cartwright, I will not fail to make it known unto you."

"I will rest my faith on your wisdom therein," replied the vicar: "but it is now time that I should go to speak the blessing of a minister, and the welcome of a friend, to the excellent lady at the Park. And remember two things, cousin Stephen: the first is, never to remain in the room with the widow Mowbray and myself, when no other persons are present; and the next is in importance like unto it,—remember that the lady is even yet new in widowhood, and that any imprudent and premature allusion to my possibly taking her in marriage might ruin all. There are those near her, cousin Stephen, who I question not will fight against me; albeit, I shall approach her in the name of the Lord."

The attorney promised to be awake and watchful, and never to permit his tongue to betray the counsels of his heart.

The cousins and friends (who, notwithstanding the difference of their callings, considered themselves, as Mr. Corbold observed, fellow-labourers in the vineyard of the Lord,) then walked forth together towards Mowbray Park, well pleased with themselves and all things around them at the present, and with pious confidence in the reward of their labours for the future.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARLES'S SORROW.—MRS. SIMPSON IN HER NEW CHARACTER.—THE VICAR'S PROCEEDINGS DISCUSSED.

THE two gentlemen found the family at the Park very sociably seated round a late breakfast table. Helen, Rosalind, and Charles, before they broke up their conclave in the library the night before, or rather that morning, had all decided that in the present thorny and difficult position of affairs, it was equally their duty and interest to propitiate the kind feelings of Mrs. Mowbray by every means in their power, and draw her thereby, if possible, from the mischievous and insidious influence of her new associates.

"It is hardly possible to believe," said Charles, "that my mother can really prefer

the society of such an animal as this methodistical attorney, to that of her own family, or of those neighbours and friends from whom, since my father's death, she has so completely withdrawn herself. It is very natural she should be out of spirits, poor dear soul! and Mr. Cartwright is just the sort of person to obtain influence at such a time; but I trust this will wear off again. She will soon get sick of the solemn attorney, and we shall all be as happy again as ever."

"God grant it!" said Helen with a sigh.

"God grant it!" echoed Rosalind with another.

It was in consequence of this resolution, that the trio continued to sit at the table much longer than usual; exerting themselves to amuse Mrs. Mowbray, to win from Fanny one of her former bright smiles, and even to make Miss Cartwright sociable.

Their efforts were not wholly unsuccessful. There was a genuine animation and vivacity about Charles that seemed irresistible: Mrs. Mowbray looked at him with a mother's eye;

Miss Cartwright forsook her monosyllable and almost conversed; and Fanny, whi listening first to Helen, and then to her br ther, forgot her duty as a professing Christia so far as to let a whole ringlet of her sunn hair get loose from behind her ear, and n notice it.

In the midst of this gleam of sunshine, th door opened, and Mr. Cartwright and M Corbold were announced. Ambitious of pr ducing effect as both these serious gentleme certainly were, they could hardly have hope when their spirits were most exalted withi them, to have caused a more remarkable rev lution in the state of things than their appea ance now produced.

Mrs. Mowbray coloured, half rose from he chair, sat down again, and finally exclaimed "Oh! Mr. Cartwright!" in a tone of voic that manifested almost every feeling he coul wish to inspire.

Fanny, who was in the very act of smilin when the door opened, immediately becam conscious that her hair was out of order, an

that her whole attitude and manner were wanting in that Christian grace and sobriety which had been of late her chiefest glory. Such Christian grace and sobriety, however, as she had lately learned, poor child! are not difficult to assume, or long in putting on; so that before "her minister" had completed his little prayer and thanksgiving in the ear of her mother, for her eternal happiness and her safe return, Fanny was quite in proper trim to meet his eye, and receive his blessing.

Henrietta at once fell back into her wonted heavy silent gloom, like a leaden statue upon which the sun, shining for a moment, had thrown the hue of silver.

Charles stood up, and saluted the vicar civilly but coldly; while to his companion's low bow he returned a slight and stiff inclination of the head.

It should be observed that, during the few days which intervened between the arrival of Charles and the return of his mother, the vicar had greatly relaxed in his attentions to Fanny, and indeed altogether in the frequency

of his pastoral visitations at the Park. He had explained this in the ear of his pretty proselyte, by telling her that he was much engaged in pushing forward the work of regeneration in his parish, to the which holy labour he was the more urgently incited by perceiving that the seed was not thrown upon barren ground. Nor indeed was this statement wholly untrue. He had taken advantage of the leisure which the present posture of affairs at the Park left upon his hands, in seeking to inflame the imaginations of as many of his parishioners as he could get to listen to him.

Among the females he had been particularly successful; and, indeed, the proportion of the fair sex who are found to embrace the tenets which this gentleman and his sect have introduced in place of those of the Church of England, is so great, that, as their faith is an exclusive one, it might be conjectured that the chief object of the doctrine was to act as a balance-weight against that of Mahomet, who, atrocious tyrant as he was, shut the gates of heaven against all woman-kind whatsoever;

were it not that an occasional nest of he-saints may here and there be found,—sometimes in a drum-profaned barrack, and sometimes in a cloistered college, which show that election is not wholly confined to the fair. There are, however, some very active and inquiring persons who assert, that upon a fair and accurate survey throughout England and Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed, no greater number of this sect can be found of the masculine gender than may suffice to perform the duties of ministers, deputy ministers, missionaries, assistant missionaries, speech-makers both in and out of parliament, committee-men, and such serious footmen, coachmen, butchers, and bakers, as the fair inhabitants of the Calvinistic heaven require to perform the unfeminine drudgery of earth.

It was in consequence of this remission in the vicar's labours for the regeneration of Fanny, that Charles Mowbray still treated him with the respect due to the clergyman of his parish. Rosalind felt it quite impossible

to describe to him all she had seen, and her promise to Henrietta forbad her to repeat what she had heard; so that young Mowbray, though he disapproved of the puritanic innovations of Fanny's toilet, and so much disliked Mr. Cartwright's extempore preaching as to have decided upon attending divine service at Oakley church for the future, to avoid hearing what he considered as so very indecent an innovation, he was still quite unaware of Rosalind's real motives for recalling him, though extremely well inclined to think her right in having done so.

Miss Torrington and Helen left the room very soon after the two gentlemen entered it. Henrietta, with the stealthy step of a cat, followed them, and young Mowbray felt strongly tempted to do the like; but was prevented, not so much by politeness perhaps, as by curiosity to ascertain, if possible, the terms on which both these gentlemen stood with his mother.

But it was not possible. As long as he remained with them, the very scanty conversa-

tion which took place was wholly on uninteresting subjects; and Charles at length left the room, from feeling that it was not his mother's pleasure to talk to the attorney of the business that he presumed must have brought him there, as long as he remained in it.

There is in the domestic history of human life no cause productive of effects so terrible as the habit of acting according to the impulse, or the convenience, of the moment, without fully considering the effect what we are doing may produce on others.

Mrs. Mowbray, in waiting till Charles left the room before she spake to Mr. Corbold of the title-deeds and other papers which she was to put into his hands, was almost wholly actuated by the consciousness that the attorney she was employing (though a serious) was a very vulgar man. She knew that her son was rather fastidious on such points; and she disliked the idea that a man, whose distinguished piety rendered him so peculiarly eligible as a man of business, should, at his first

introduction to the confidential situation she intended he should hold, lay himself open to the ridicule of a youth, who, she sighed to think, was as yet quite incapable of appreciating his merit in any way.

If any secondary motive mixed with this, it arose from the averseness she felt, of which she was not herself above half conscious, that any one should hear advice given by Mr. Cartwright, who might think themselves at liberty to question it; but, with all this, she never dreamed of the pain she was giving to Charles's heart. She dreamed not that her son,—her only son,—with a heart as warm, as generous, as devoted in its filial love, as ever beat in the breast of a man, felt all his ardent affection for her,—his proud fond wish of being her protector, her aid, her confidential friend—now checked and chilled at once, and for ever!

This consequence of her cold, restrained manner in his presence, was so natural,—in fact, so inevitable,—that had she turned her eyes from herself and her own little unimportant feelings, to what might be their effect

upon his, it is hardly possible that she could have avoided catching some glimpse of the danger she ran,—and much after misery might have been spared; as it was, she felt a movement of unequivocal satisfaction when he departed; and, having told Fanny to join the other young ladies while she transacted business, she was left alone with the two gentlemen, and, in a few minutes afterwards, the contents of her late husband's strong-box, consisting of parchments, memoranda, and deeds almost innumerable, overspread the large table, as well as every sofa and chair within convenient reach.

The two serious gentlemen smiled, but it was inwardly. Their eyes ran over the inscriptions of every precious packet; and if those of the professional man caught more rapidly at a glance the respective importance of each, the vicar had the advantage of him in that prophetic feeling of their future importance to himself, which rendered the present hour one of the happiest of his life.

Meanwhile, Charles sought Helen and her

friend. Far, however, from wishing to impart to them the painful impression he had received, his principal object in immediately seeking them was, if possible, to forget it. He found the four girls together in the conservatory, and, affecting more gaiety than he felt, exclaimed, "How many recruits shall I get among you to join me in a walk to Wrexhill? One, two, three, four! That's delightful! Make haste; bonnet and veil yourselves without delay: and if we skirt round the plantations to the lodge, we shall escape being broiled, for the lanes are always shady."

When he had got his convoy fairly under weigh, they began to make inquiries as to what he was going to do at Wrexhill. "I will tell you," he replied, "if you will promise not to run away and forsake me."

They pledged themselves to be faithful to their escort, and he then informed them that it was his very particular wish and desire to pay sundry visits to the *beau monde* of Wrexhill.

"It is treason to the milliner not to have told us so before, Charles," said Helen; "only

look at poor Fanny's little straw-bonnet, without even a bow to set it off. What will Mrs. Simpson think of us?"

"I assure you, Helen," said Fanny, "that if I had known we were going to visit all the fine people in the county, I should have put on no other bonnet; and as for Mrs. Simpson, I believe you are quite mistaken in supposing she would object to it. I hope she has seen the error of her ways, as well as I have, Charles; and that we shall never more see her dressed like a heathenish woman, as she used to do."

"Oh Fanny! Fanny!" exclaimed Charles, laughing. "How long will this spirit vex you."

Fortunately however, for the harmony of the excursion, none of the party appeared at this moment inclined to controversy, and the subject dropped. Instead, therefore, of talking of different modes of faith, and of the bonnets thereunto belonging, the conversation turned upon the peculiar beauty of the woodland scenery around Wrexhill; and Miss Cart-

wright, as almost a stranger, was applied to for her opinion of it.

"I believe I am a very indifferent judge of scenery," she replied. "The fact is, I never see it."

"Do you not see it now?" said Rosalind. "Do you not see that beautiful stretch of park-like common, with its tufts of holly, its rich groups of forest-trees, with their dark heavy drapery of leaves, relieved by the light and wavy gracefulness of the delicate and silvery birch? and, loveliest of all, do you not see that stately avenue of oaks, the turf under them green in eternal shade, and the long perspective, looking like the nave of some gigantic church?"

Rosalind stood still as she spoke, and Henrietta remained beside her. They were descending the bit of steep road, which, passing behind the church and the vicarage, led into the village street of Wrexhill, and the scene described by Miss Torrington was at this point completely given to their view.

Henrietta put her arm within that of Rosa-

lind with a degree of familiarity very unusual with her, and, having gazed on the fair expanse before her for several minutes, she replied,

"Yes, Rosalind, I do see it now, and I thank you for making it visible to me. Perhaps in future, when I may perchance be thinking of you, I may see it again."

Rosalind turned to seek her meaning in her face, and saw that her dark deep-set eyes were full of tears. This was so unexpected, so unprecedented, so totally unlike any feeling she had ever remarked in her before, that Rosalind was deeply touched by it, and, pressing the arm that rested on hers, she said:

"Dear Henrietta! Why are you so averse to letting one understand what passes in your heart? It is only by an accidental breath, which now and then lifts the veil you hang before it, that one can even find out you have any heart at all."

"Did you know all the darkness that dwells there, you would not thank me for showing it to you."

Having said this, she stepped hastily forward, and drawing on Rosalind, who would have lingered, with her, till they had overtaken the others, they all turned from the lane into the village street together.

They had not proceeded a hundred yards, before they were met by a dozen rosy and riotous children returning from dinner to school. At sight of the Mowbray party, every boy uncapped, and every little girl made her best courtesy; but one unlucky wag, whose eyes unfortunately fixed themselves on Fanny, being struck by the precision of her little bonnet, straight hair, and the total absence of frill, furbelow, or any other indication of worldly-mindedness, restrained his bounding steps for a moment, and, pursing up his little features into a look of sanctity, exclaimed—"Amen!"—and then, terrified at what he had done, galloped away and hid himself among his fellows.

Fanny coloured; but immediately assumed the resigned look that announceth martyrdom. Charles laughed, though he turned round and shook his switch at the saucy offender. Helen

looked vexed, Rosalind amused, and Henrietta very nearly delighted.

A few minutes more brought them to the door of Mrs. Simpson's. Their inquiry for the lady was answered by the information that she "was schooling miss; but if they would be pleased to walk in, she would come down directly." They accordingly entered the drawing-room, where they were kept waiting for some time, which was indeed pretty generally the fate of morning visitors to Mrs. Simpson.

The interval was employed as the collectors of albums and annuals intend all intervals should be, namely, in the examination of all the morrocco-bound volumes deposited on the grand round table in the middle of the room, and on all the square, oblong, octagon, and oval minor tables, in the various nooks and corners of it.

On the present occasion they seemed to promise more amusement than usual to the party, who had most of them been frequently there before,—for they were nearly all new. Poor little Fanny, though she knew that not one of those with her were capable of enjoying the

intellectual and edifying feast that almost the first glance of her eye showed her was set before them, could not restrain an exclamation of —"Oh! How heavenly-minded!"

The whole collection indeed, which though recently and hastily formed, had evidently been brought together by the hand of a master of such matters, was not only most strictly evangelical, but most evangelically ingenious.

Helen, however, appeared to find food neither for pleasantry nor edification there; for having opened one or two slender volumes, and as many heavy pamphlets, she abandoned the occupation with a sigh, that spoke sadness and vexation. Miss Cartwright, who had seated herself on the same sofa, finished her examination still more quickly, saying in a low voice as she settled herself in a well-pillowed corner—

"Surfeit is the father of much fast."

Miss Torrington and young Mowbray got hold of by far the finest volume of all, whose gilt leaves and silken linings showed that it was intended as the repository of the most

precious gifts, that, according to the frontispiece, Genius could offer to Friendship. Having given a glance at its contents, Charles drew out his pencil, and on the blank side of a letter wrote the following catalogue of them, which, though imperfect as not naming them all, was most scrupulously correct as far as it went:

"Saint Paul's head, sketched in pen and ink;
'Here's the bower,' to words of grace;
The death-bed talk of Master Blink;
Lines on a fallen maiden's case.
Sonnet upon heavenly love;
A pencil drawing of Saint Peter,
Emblems—the pigeon and the dove.
Gray's Odes, turned to psalm-tune metre.
A Christian ode in praise of tea,
Freely translated from Redi."

He had just presented the scrap to Rosalind when Mrs. Simpson entered, leading her little girl in her hand; but the young lady had leisure to convey it unnoticed to her pocket, as the mistress of the house had for the first few minutes eyes only for Fanny. In fact, she literally ran to her the instant she

perceived her little bonnet, and, folding her arms round her, exclaimed—

"My dear, dear child! My dear, dear sister! This is providential! It is a blessing I shall remember alway! Our minister told me that I should read at a glance the blessed change wrought upon you: I do read it, and I will praise the Lord therefore! I beg your pardon, ladies. Mr. Mowbray, pray sit down —I beg your pardon: I rejoice to see you, though as yet——"

Her eyes fixed themselves on the bonnet of Rosalind, which, besides being large, had the abomination of sundry bows, not to mention a bunch of laburnum blossoms.

"Ah! my dear Miss Helen! The time will come—I will supplicate the Lord alway that it may—when you too, like your precious sister, shall become a sign and ensample to all men. How the seed grows, my sweet Miss Fanny!" she continued, turning to the only one of her guests whom, strictly speaking, she considered it right to converse with. "How it grows and spreads under the dew of faith

and the sunshine of righteousness. It is just three months, three little blessed months, since the beam first fell upon my heart, Miss Fanny; and look at me, look at my child, look at my albums, look at my books, look at my card-racks, look at my missionary's box on one side, and my London Lord-days' society box on the other. Is not this a ripening and preparing for the harvest, Miss Fanny?"

Fanny coloured, partly perhaps from pride and pleasure; but partly, certainly, from shyness at being so distinguished, and only murmured the word "Beautiful!" in reply.

Miss Mowbray felt equally provoked and disgusted; but, while inwardly resolving that she would never again put herself in the way of witnessing what she so greatly condemned, she deemed it best to stay, if possible, the torrent of nonsense which was thus overwhelming her sister, by giving another turn to the conversation.

"Have you seen Mrs. Richards lately, Mrs. Simpson?" she said.

"Mrs. Richards and I very rarely meet

now, Miss Mowbray," was the reply. "The three young ladies indeed, I am happy to say, have wholly separated themselves from their mother in spirit, and are all of them becoming shining lights. Oh, Miss Fanny! how sweetly pious are those lines written between you and little Mary!"

Fanny suddenly became as red as scarlet.

"The alternate verses, I mean, in praise and glory of our excellent minister. He brought them to me himself, and we read them together, and we almost shed tears of tender blessing on you both, dear children!"

Charles, who thought, and with great satisfaction, that whatever stuff his poor little sister might have written, she was now very heartily ashamed of it, wishing to relieve her from the embarrassment, which nevertheless he rejoiced to see, rose from his chair and approaching a window, said,

"What a very pleasant room you have here, Mrs. Simpson; it is almost due east, is it not? If the room over it be your apartment, I should think the sun must pay you too early

a visit there, unless your windows are well curtained."

"Oh, Mr. Mowbray! Sunrise is such a time of praise and blessing, that, even though the curtains are drawn, I always try, if I am awake, to think how heavenly it is looking outside."

"Are you an early riser, Mrs. Simpson?" said Helen.

"Not very,—at least not always; but since my election I have been endeavouring to get down to prayers by about half-past eight. It is so delightful to think how many people are coming down stairs to prayers just at half-past eight!"

"Your little girl is very much grown, Mrs. Simpson," said Miss Torrington, willing to try another opening by which to escape from under the heels of the lady's hobby; but it did not answer.

"Hold up your head, Minima dear!" said the mamma; "and tell these ladies what you have been learning lately. She is still rather shy; but it is going off, I hope. Precious

child! she is grown such a prayerful thing, Miss Fanny, you can't imagine. Minima, why did you not eat up all your currant-pudding yesterday? tell Miss Fanny Mowbray!"

"Because it is wicked to love currant-pudding," answered the child, folding her little hands one over the other upon the bosom of her plain frock, no longer protruding in all directions its sumptuous chevaux-de-frise of lace and embroidery.

"Darling angel! And why, my precious! is it wicked?"

"Because it is a sin to care for our vile bodies, and because we ought to love nothing but the Lord."

"Is not that a blessing?" said Mrs. Simpson, again turning to Fanny. "And how can I be grateful enough to the angelic man who has put me and my little one in the right way?"

It was really generous in good Mrs. Simpson to give all the praise due for the instruction and religious awakening of her little girl to the vicar, for it was in truth entirely her

own work; as it generally happened, that when Mr. Cartwright paid her a visit, fearing probably that the movements of a child might disturb his nerves, she dismissed her little Minima to her nursery.

One or two more attempts on the part of Helen to bring the conversation to a tone that she should consider as more befitting the neighbourly chit-chat of a morning visit, and, in plain English, less tinctured with blasphemy, having been made and failed, she rose and took her leave, the rest of her party following; but not without Fanny's receiving another embrace, and this fervent farewell uttered in her ear:

"The saints and angels bless and keep you, dear sister in the Lord!"

After quitting the house of this regenerated lady, the party proposed to make a visit to that of Mrs. Richards; but Miss Cartwright expressed a wish to go to the Vicarage instead, and begged they would call at the door for her as they passed. Miss Torrington offered to accompany her, but this was declined,

though not quite in her usual cynical manner upon such occasions; and, could Rosalind have followed her with her eye up the Vicarage hill, she would have seen that she stopped and turned to look down upon the common and its trees, just at the spot where they had stood together before.

On entering Mrs. Richards's pretty flower-scented little saloon, they were startled and somewhat embarrassed at finding that lady in tears, and Major Dalrymple walking about the room with very evident symptoms of discomposure. Helen, who, like everybody else in the neighbourhood, was perfectly aware of the major's unrequited attachment, or, at any rate, his unsuccessful suit, really thought that the present moment was probably intended by him to decide his fate for ever; and felt exceedingly distressed at having intruded, though doubtful whether to retreat now would not make matters worse. Those who followed her shared both her fears and her doubts: but not so the widow and the major; who both, after the interval of a moment, during which Mrs.

Richards wiped her eyes, and Major Dalrymple recovered his composure, declared with very evident sincerity that they were heartily glad to see them.

"We are in the midst of a dispute, Mowbray," said the major, addressing Charles; "and I will bet a thousand to one that you will be on my side, whatever the ladies may be. Shall I refer the question to Charles Mowbray, Mrs. Richards?"

"Oh yes! I shall like to have it referred to the whole party!" she replied.

"Well then, this it is:—I need not tell you, good people, that the present vicar of Wrexhill is—but *holt là!*" he exclaimed, suddenly stopping himself and fixing his eyes on Fanny; "I am terribly afraid by the trim cut of that little bonnet, that there 's one amongst us that will be taking notes. Is it so, Miss Fanny? Are you as completely over head and ears in love with the vicar, as your friend little Mary? and, for that matter, Louisa, Charlotte, Mrs. Simpson, Miss Minima Simpson, Dame Rogers the miller's wife, black-eyed Betsey the tailor's

daughter, Molly Tomkins, Sally Finden, Jenny Curtis, Susan Smith, and about threescore and ten more of our parish, have all put on the armour of righteousness, being buckled, belted, and spurred by the vicar himself. Are you really and truly become one of his babes of grace, Fanny?"

"If it is your intention to say anything disrespectful of Mr. Cartwright," replied Fanny, "I had much rather not hear it. I will go and look at your roses, Mrs. Richards;" and, as Mrs. Richards did not wish her to remain, she quietly opened the glass-door which led into the garden, let her pass through it, and then closed it after her.

"Pretty creature!" exclaimed Major Dalrymple; "what a pity!"

"It will not last, major," said Charles. "He has scared her conscience, which is actually too pure and innocent to know the sound of its own voice; and then he seized upon her fanciful and poetic imagination, and set it in arms against her silly self, till

she really seems to see the seven mortal sins, turn which way she will; and I am sure she would stand for seven years together on one leg, like an Hindoo, to avoid them. She is a dear good little soul, and she will get the better of all this trash, depend upon it."

"I trust she will, Mowbray; but tell me, while the mischief is still at work, shall you not think it right to banish the causer of it from your house? For you must know this brings us exactly to the point at issue between Mrs. Richards and me. She is breaking her heart because her three girls—ay, little Mary and all—have been bit by this black tarantula; and because she (thank God!) has escaped, her daughters have thought proper to raise the standard of rebellion, and to tell her very coolly, upon all occasions, that she is doomed to everlasting perdition, and that their only chance of escape is never more to give obedience or even attention to any word she can utter."

The majór stopped, overcome by his own

vehemence; and Charles would have fancied that he saw tears in his eyes, if he had dared to look at him for another moment.

Rosalind, who had more love and liking for Mrs. Richards than is usually the growth of six months' acquaintance, had placed herself close beside her, and taken her hand; but, when Major Dalrymple ceased speaking, she rose up, and with a degree of energy that probably surprised all her hearers, but most especially Charles and Helen, she said:

"If, Major Dalrymple, you should be the first in this unfortunate parish of Wrexhill to raise your voice against this invader of the station, rights, and duties of a set of men in whose avocations he has neither part nor lot, you will deserve more honour than even the field of Waterloo could give you! Yes! turn him from your house, dear friend, as you would one who brought poison to you in the guise of wholesome food or healing medicine. Let him never enter your doors again; let him preach (if preach he must) in a church as

empty as his own pretensions to holiness; and if proper authority should at length be awaked to chase him from a pulpit that belongs of right to a true and real member of the English church, then let him buy a sixpenny licence, if he can get it, to preach in a tub, the only fitting theatre for his doctrines."

"Bravo!" cried the major in a perfect ecstasy; "do you hear her, Mrs. Richards? Charles Mowbray, do you hear her? and will either of you ever suffer Cartwright to enter your doors again?"

"I believe in my soul that she is quite right," said Charles: "the idiot folly I have witnessed at Mrs. Simpson's this morning; and the much more grievous effects which his ministry, as he calls it, has produced here, have quite convinced me that such *ministry* is no jesting matter. But I have no doors, Dalrymple, to shut against him; all I can do is to endeavour to open my mother's eyes to the mischief he is doing."

Helen sighed, and shook her head.

"Is, then, your good mother too far gone in this maudlin delirium to listen to him?" said the major in an accent of deep concern.

"Indeed, major, I fear so," replied Helen.

"I told you so, Major Dalrymple," said Mrs. Richards; "I told you that in such a line of conduct as you advise I should be supported by no one of any consequence, and I really do not feel courage to stand alone in it."

"And it is that very want of courage that I deplore more than all the rest," replied the major. "You, that have done and suffered so much, with all the quiet courage of a real hero,—that you should now sink before such an enemy as this, is what I really cannot see with patience."

"And whence comes this new-born cowardice, my dear Mrs. Richards?" said Rosalind.

"I will tell you, Miss Torrington," replied the black-eyed widow, her voice trembling with emotion as she spoke,—"I will tell you: all the courage of which I have ever given proof, has been inspired, strengthened, and set in

action by my children,—by my love for them, and their love for me. This is over: I have lost their love, I have lost their confidence. They look upon me,—even my Mary, who once shared every feeling of my heart,—they all look upon me as one accursed of God, separated from them through all eternity, and doomed by a decree of my Maker, decided on thousands of years before I was born, to live for countless ages in torments unspeakable. They repeat all this, and hug the faith that teaches it. Is not this enough to sap the courage of the stoutest heart that ever woman boasted?"

"It is dreadful!" cried Helen; "oh! most dreadful! Such then will be, and already are, the feelings of my mother respecting me,—respecting Charles. Yet, how she loved us! A few short months ago, how dearly she loved us both!"

"Come, come, Miss Mowbray; I did not mean to pain you in this manner," said the major. "Do not fancy things worse than they really are: depend upon it, your brother

will take care to prevent this man's impious profanation of religion from doing such mischief at Mowbray as it has done here. Had there been any master of the house at Meadow Cottage, this gentleman, so miscalled *reverend*, would never, never, never, have got a footing there."

"Then I heartily wish there were," said Charles, "if only for the sake of setting a good example to the parish in general; but, for the Park in particular, it is as masterless as the cottage."

"I believe," said Mrs. Richards, "that amongst you I shall gain courage to be mistress here; and this, if effectually done, may answer as well. You really advise me, then, all of you, to forbid the clergyman of the parish from entering my doors?"

"Yes," replied the major firmly; and he was echoed zealously by the rest of the party.

"So be it then," said Mrs. Richards. "But I would my enemy, for such indeed he is, held any other station among us. I could shut my doors against all the lords and ladies in the

country with less pain than against the clergyman."

"I can fully enter into that feeling," said Helen: "but surely, in proportion as the station is venerable, the abuse of it is unpardonable. Let this strengthen your resolution; and your children will recover their wits again, depend upon it. I would the same remedy could be applied with us! but you are so much respected, my dear Mrs. Richards, that I am not without hope from your example. Adieu! We shall be anxious to hear how you go on; and you must not fail to let us see you soon."

The Mowbray party, having recalled the self-banished Fanny, then took leave, not without the satisfaction of believing that their visit had been well-timed and useful.

CHAPTER IX.

DISCUSSION ON TRUTH.—MR. CORBOLD INSTALLED.

Having called at the Vicarage for Miss Cartwright, they proceeded homeward along the pleasant paths they had so often trod with light-hearted gaiety; but now there was a look of care and anxious thoughtfulness on each young brow, that seemed to say their happiness was blighted by the fear of sorrow to come.

Though not at all able to understand Henrietta, and not above half liking her, there was yet more feeling of intimacy between Miss Torrington and her than had been attained by any other of the family. It was she, therefore, who, after preceding the others by a few rapid steps up the hill, rang the bell of the Vicarage, and waited in the porch for Miss Cartwright.

During these few moments the trio had passed on, and Miss Torrington, finding herself tête-à-tête with the vicar's daughter, ventured to relate to her pretty nearly all that occurred at the house of Mrs. Richards; by no means omitting the resolution that lady had come to respecting Mr. Cartwright.

"I am very sorry for it," said Henrietta.

"You regret the loss of their society? Then for your sake, Henrietta, I am sorry too."

"For my sake? *I* regret the loss of their society! Are you not mocking me?"

"You know I am not," replied Rosalind in a tone of vexation; "why should you not regret the loss of Mrs. Richards' society?"

"Only because there is no society in the world that I could either wish for,—or regret."

"It is hardly fair in you, Miss Cartwright," said Rosalind, "to excite my interest so often as you do, and yet to leave it for ever pining, for want of a more full and generous confidence."

"I have no such feeling as generosity in

me; and as to exciting your interest, I do assure you it is quite involuntarily; and, indeed, I should think that no human being could be less likely to trouble their fellow-creatures in that way than myself."

"But is there not at least a little wilfulness, Henrietta, in the manner in which from time to time you throw out a bait to my curiosity?"

"It is weakness, not wilfulness, Rosalind. I am ashamed to confess, even to myself, that there are moments when I fancy I should like to love you; and then I would give more than my worthless life, if I had it, that you should love me. When this contemptible folly seizes me, I may, perhaps, as you say, throw out a bait to catch your curiosity, and then it is I utter the words of which you complain. But you must allow that this childishness never holds me long, and that the moment it is past I become as reasonable and as wretched again as ever."

"Will you tell me whether this feeling of profound contempt for yourself, whenever you

are conscious of a kindly sentiment towards me, arises from your conviction of my individual despicability, or from believing that all human affections are degrading?"

"Not exactly from either. As for you, Rosalind,—is it not the weak and wavering Hamlet who says, in one of those flashes of fine philosophy that burst athwart the gloom of his poor troubled spirit,

'Give me that man that is not passion's slave?'

My wits are often as much diseased as his, I believe; but I too have my intervals; and, when the moon is not at the full, I sometimes sketch the portrait of a being that one might venture to love. I, however, have no quarrel against passion,—it is not from thence my sorrows have come;—but I would say,

'Give me that friend
That is not *falsehood's* slave, and I will wear him
(or her, Rosalind,)
In my heart's core,—ay, in my heart of heart.'

And if after all my hard schooling I could be simple enough to believe that anything in

human form could be true, I should be more likely to commit the folly about you than about any one I ever saw in my life."

"But still you believe me false?"

"I do."

"And why, Henrietta?"

"Because you are a woman;—no, no, because you are a human being."

"And you really, without meaning to season your speech with pungent crystals of satire,—you really do not believe that truth can be found in any human being?"

"I really do not."

"God help you, then! I would rather pass my life in a roofless cabin, and feed on potatoe-parings, than live in such a persuasion."

"And so would I, Rosalind."

"Then why do you nourish such hateful theories? I shall begin to think your jesting words too true, Henrietta; and believe, indeed, that your wits are not quite healthy."

"Would I could believe it! I would submit to a strait-waistcoat and shaven crown to-morrow if I could but persuade myself that I

was mad, and that all I have fancied going on around me were but so many vapours from a moon-sick brain."

"And so they have been, if you construe every word you hear, and every act you see, into falsehood and delusion."

"Rosalind! Rosalind!—how can I do otherwise? Come, come, enough of this: do not force me against my will, against my resolution, to tell you what has brought me to the wretched, hopeless state of apathy in which you found me. Were I to do this, you would only have to follow the weakness of your nature, and believe, in order to become as moody and as miserable as myself."

"But you do not mean to tell me that I should be proving my weakness in believing *you*?"

"Indeed I do. You surely cannot be altogether so credulous as to suppose that all you see in me is true, sincere, candid, open, honest?"

"Are you honest now in telling me that you are false?"

"Why, partly yes, and partly no, Rosa-

lind; and it is just such a question as that which sets one upon discovering how contrary to our very essence it is, to be purely and altogether true. But were I one of those who fancy that pincushions are often made by the merciful decrees of an all-wise Providence, I should say that we were ordained to be false, in order to prevent our being straightforward, undisguised demons. Why, I,—look you,—who sit netting a purse that I hope will never be finished, as diligently as if my life would be saved by completing the last stitch by a given time, and as quietly as if I had no nails upon my fingers, and no pointed scissors in my netting-case,—even I, all harmless as I seem, would be likely, were it not for my consummate hypocrisy, to be stabbing and scratching half a dozen times a day."

"And, were you freed from this restraint, would your maiming propensities betray themselves promiscuously, or be confined to one or more particular objects?"

"Not quite promiscuously, I think. But, hypocrisy apart for a moment, do you not

perceive that Mr. Charles Mowbray has been looking round at us,—at both of us, observe,—about once in every second minute? Do you know that I think he would like us,—both of us, observe,—to walk on and join the party."

"Well, then, let us do so," said Rosalind.

* * * * * *

As they drew near the house, they perceived Mr. Stephen Corbold wandering round it, his hands behind his back and under his coat, and his eyes now raised to the stately portico, now lowered to the long range of windows belonging to the conservatory; at one moment sent afield over the spacious park, and in the next brought back again to contemplate anew the noble mansion to which it belonged. During one of the wanderings of those speculating orbs, he spied the advancing party; and immediately settling himself in his attire, and assuming the more graceful attitude obtained by thrusting a hand in each side-pocket of his nether garments, he resolutely walked forward to meet them.

Fanny, his friends and kinsfolk being ever

in her memory, made an effort which seemed to combat instinct, and put out her little hand to welcome him; but before he was fully aware of the honour, for indeed his eyes were fixed upon her elder sister, she coloured, and withdrew it again, satisfying her hospitable feelings by pronouncing simply his name, but with a sort of indistinctness in the accent which seemed to signify that something more had either preceded or followed it.

This word, the only one which greeted him, brought him instantly to her side, and even gave him the prodigious audacity to offer his arm, which, however, she did not accept; for at that moment the hook of her parasol became entangled in the fringe of her shawl, and it seemed to require vast patience and perseverance to extricate it. Still, notwithstanding this little disappointment, he kept close to her side, for Helen leaned upon the arm of her brother; and, though still persuaded that by the aid of his reverend cousin he should be able to obtain her, and pretty nearly everything else he wished for, he had no parti-

cular inclination to renew the courtship he had begun on the journey in the presence of Charles.

Fanny, therefore, and her attendant entered the house together; while the rest wheeled off in order to avail themselves of a postern entrance, by which the ladies might reach their rooms without any risk of again encountering Mr. Corbold, who by a sort of tacit consent seemed equally avoided by all.

The survey which this person was taking of the premises when the walking party returned, was neither the first, second, third, nor fourth which he had had the opportunity of making since their setting out; for, in obedience to Mr. Cartwright's hint, he had no sooner received from Mrs. Mowbray, under the instructions from that reverend person, the orders necessary for the new arrangements about to be made, than he retired,—the vicar remaining with the widow and the keys of her title-deeds, which perhaps he had reason for thinking would be as safe anywhere else as in his cousin Stephen's pocket.

The tête-à-tête which followed the attorney's departure was long, interesting, and very confidential. On the part of the gentleman great skill was displayed by the manner in which the following subjects were made to mix and mingle together, till, like to a skilfully composed ragout, no flavour of any kind was left distinctly perceptible, but the effect of the whole was just what the artist intended it should be. The subjects leading to, and composing this general effect, were: first, the deep interest raised in the breast of every good man by the sight of a gentle and heavenly-minded woman in want of assistance to carry her through the wearying and unspiritual cares incident to our passage through this world of sin; secondly, the exceeding out-pouring of mercy to be traced in such dispensations as led the unawakened to look for such aid and assistance from those who have been called and elected by the Lord; thirdly, the blessed assurance of everlasting joy that never failed to visit those who left husband or child for the Lord's sake; fourthly, the unerring

wisdom of the Lord in the placing the tender consciences of the newly-chosen in the keeping of those who best know how to lead them aright; fifthly, the damnable and never-to-be-atoned-for wickedness of struggling against the Lord for the sake of any worldly feelings or affections whatever; and sixthly, the saving merit, surpassing all the works that our sinful nature could ever permit us to perform, which the Lord finds in such as cling to his spoken word, and hold fast to the persecuted and oppressed who preach it. On these themes, blended and harmonised together so as completely to mystify the mind of the weak and nervous Mrs. Mowbray, and accompanied with just so much gentle demonstration of affectionate tenderness as might soften, without alarming her, did the Vicar of Wrexhill discourse for the three hours that they were left alone.

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It would lead my narrative into too great length were every step recorded by which all Mrs. Mowbray's other feelings were made to

merge in the one overwhelming influence of Calvinistic terror on one side, and Calvinistic pride at presumed election on the other. The wily vicar contrived in the course of a few months so completely to rule the heart and head of this poor lady, that she looked upon her son Charles as a reprobate, who, unless speedily changed in spirit by severe discipline and the constant prayers of Mr. Cartwright, must inevitably pass from this mortal life to a state of endless torture in the life to come. For Helen she was bade to hope that the time of election, after much wrestling with the Lord, would come; in Fanny she was told to glory and rejoice; and for Miss Torrington, quietly to wait the appointed time, till the Lord should make his voice heard, when it would be borne in upon his mind, or upon that of some one of the elect, whether she must be given over to eternal destruction, or saved with the remnant of the true flock which he and his brother shepherds were bringing together into one fold.

But with all this, though eternally talking

of mystical and heavenly love, which was ever blended with insidious demonstrations of holy, brotherly, and Christian tenderness, Mr. Cartwright had never yet spoken to the widow Mowbray of marriage.

She had been six months a widow, and her deep mourning weeds were exchanged for a dress elegantly becoming, but still marking her as belonging to what Mr. Cartwright constantly called, in the midst of all his prosperous intrigues, the "persecuted church of Christ." Mr. Stephen Corbold was comfortably settled in a snug little mansion in the village, and though he had never yet got hold of the title deeds, he had begun to receive the rents of the Mowbray estates. He too was waiting the appointed time,—namely, the installing of his cousin at the Park,—for the fruition of all his hopes in the possession of Helen, and in such a fortune with her as his report of her progress towards regeneration might entitle her to. Mrs. Richards had been refused bread by a converted baker; beer, by an elected brewer; and soap and candles,

by that pious, painstaking, prayerful servant of the Lord, Richard White, the tallow-chandler. Her daughters, however, still held fast to the faith; though their poor mother grew thinner and paler every day, and continued to meet the vicar sometimes in the highways, sometimes in the byways, and sometimes in the exemplary Mrs. Simpson's drawing-room. Colonel Harrington had returned to his regiment without ever again seeing Helen, who had been forbidden with such awful denunciations in case of disobedience from ever holding any intercourse direct or indirect with the family at Oakley, that though she pined in thought, she obeyed, and was daily denounced by Sir Gilbert and his lady, though happily she knew it not, as the most ungrateful and heartless of girls. Fanny was growing tall, thin, sour-looking, and miserable; for having a sort of stubborn feeling within her which resisted the assurances she almost hourly received of having been elected to eternal grace, she was secretly torturing her distempered conscience with the belief that she was delud-

ing every one but God,—that he alone read her heart and knew her to be reprobate, hardened and unregenerate, and that she must finally and inevitably come to be the prey of the worm that dyeth not and the fire that is never quenched. The sufferings of this innocent young creature under this terrible persuasion were dreadful, and the more so because she communicated them to none. Had she displayed the secret terrors of her soul to Mr. Cartwright or her mother, she knew she should be told with praises and caresses that she was only the more blessed and sure of immortal glory for feeling them. Had she opened her heart to her sister, her brother, or Rosalind, her sufferings would probably have soon ceased; but from this she shrank, as from degradation unbearable.

Poor Rosalind, meanwhile, was as profoundly unhappy as it was well possible for a girl to be who was young, beautiful, rich, talented, well-born, sweet-tempered, high-principled, not crossed in love, and moreover in perfect health.

Young Mowbray had just taken a distinguished degree at Oxford, and having given a farewell banquet to his college friends, returned home with the hope of speedily obtaining the commission in a regiment of horse for which his name had been long ago put down by his father.

It was at this time that several circumstances occurred at Wrexhill sufficiently important to the principal personages of my narrative to be recorded at some length.

CHAPTER X.

FANNY'S RELIGION.—A VISIT TO OAKLEY.

It was towards the end of November that young Mowbray returned from Oxford to his mother's house in Hampshire. As usual, the first three or four hours' chat with Helen and Rosalind put him *au fait* of all that had taken place during his absence. The retrospect was not a cheering one; yet most of the circumstances which tended to annoy him were of that minor kind which none but a very gossipping correspondent would detail—and Helen was not such. Besides, since the mysterious letter which had recalled Charles to keep watch over Fanny, (the full and true purpose of which letter he had never yet discovered,) Miss Torrington had not written to him; and as she was now the chief historian, her round

and unvarnished tale made him acquainted with many particulars to which Helen had scarcely alluded in her correspondence with him.

Helen Mowbray's was not a spirit to exhaust itself and its sorrows by breathing unavailing complaints; and though her brother had pretty clearly understood from her letters that she was not happy or comfortable at home, it was from Rosalind he first learned how many circumstances were daily occurring to make her otherwise.

The only point on which he blamed her, or in which, according to Rosalind's account, she had shown more yielding, and, as he called it, weakness than her helpless and most unhappy position rendered unavoidable, was in the never having attempted to see Lady Harrington. This he declared was in itself wrong, and rendered doubly so by her situation, which would have rendered the society and counsel of such a friend invaluable. But he did not know—even Rosalind did not know—that this forbearance for which he blamed her was the

result of those qualities for which they most loved her. But Helen knew, though they did not, that if she had gone to Oakley, she should have thought more of hearing news of Colonel Harrington than of any advice her godmother could have given her, and have been infinitely more anxious to learn if he ever mentioned her in his letters, than to know whether Lady Harrington thought it best that she should be civil, or that she should be rude, in her demeanour towards the Vicar of Wrexhill.

It was this conscious weakness which lent strength to the unreasonable violence of her mother on this point. Had Helen been quite fancy-free and altogether heart-whole, she would have had courage to discover that a passionate prohibition, originating, as she could not doubt it did, with a man for whom she entertained no species of esteem, ought not to make her abandon one of the kindest friends she had ever known. But there is a feeling stronger than reason in a young girl's breast; and again and again this feeling had whispered to Helen,

"'It is not maidenly—'

to go to the house of a man that I fear I love, and that I hope loves me, for the chance of hearing his name mentioned—and that too when my mother forbids me to enter his father's doors."

But there was an authority in Charles's voice when he said, "You have been wrong, Helen," which seemed to have power even over this, and she promised that if after he paid the visit to Oakley, which he was fully determined to do on the morrow, he should report that her friends there were not too angry to receive her; she would consent to volunteer a visit to them, assigning as her reason for doing so, to her mother, that it was Charles's wish.

This conversation took place on the night of his arrival, and lasted for some hours after every individual of the household, excepting those engaged in it, were in bed. Poor Fanny was among those who had the earliest retired, but she was not among the sleepers. She too had once loved Charles most dearly, and most dearly had she been loved in return. But now she felt that they were separated for ever in

this world, and that if they were doomed to meet in the world to come, it could only be amidst torturing and devouring flames. As she knelt for long hours beside her bed before she dared to lay her aching head on the pillow, her thoughts reverted to her early youth, and to all the innocent delights she had enjoyed with him and the now avoided Helen; and as she remembered the ecstasy with which she once enjoyed the bloom of flowers, the songs of birds, the breath of early morning, and all the poetry of Nature, tears of silent, unacknowledged, but most bitter regret, streamed from her eyes. But then again came the ague fit of visionary remorse and genuine Calvinistic terror, and she groaned aloud in agony of spirit for having suffered these natural tears to fall.

This dreadful vigil left such traces on the pale cheek and heavy eye of the suffering girl, that her brother's heart ached as he looked at her; and though with little hope, after what he had heard, of doing any good, he determined to seek half an hour's conversation with her before he went out.

When she rose to leave the breakfast-table therefore, Charles rose too, and following her out of the room, stopped her as she was in the act of ascending the stairs by putting his arm round her waist and saying, "Fanny, will you take a walk with me in the shrubbery?"

Fanny started, and coloured, and hesitated, as if some deed of very doubtful tendency had been proposed to her. But he persevered. "Come, dear! put your bonnet on—I will wait for you here—make haste, Fanny! Think how long it is since you and I took a walk together!"

"Is Helen going?" The question was asked in a voice that trembled; for the idea that Charles meant during this walk to question her concerning her faith occurred to her, and she would have given much to avoid it. But before she could invent an excuse for doing so, her conscience, always ready to enforce the doing whatever was most disagreeable to her, suggested that this shrinking looked like being ashamed of her principles; and no sooner had this idea suggested itself, than she said readily,

"Very well, Charles; I will come to you in a moment."

But the moment was rather a long one; for Fanny, before she rejoined him, knelt down and made an extempore prayer for courage and strength to resist and render of no effect whatever he might say to her. Thus prepared, she set forth ready to listen with the most determined obstinacy to any argument which might tend to overthrow any part of the creed that was poisoning the very sources of her life.

"You are not looking well, my Fanny," said her brother, fondly pressing her arm as they turned into the most sheltered part of the garden. "Do you think the morning too cold for walking, my love? You used to be such a hardy little thing, Fanny, that you cared for nothing; but I am afraid the case is different now."

This was not exactly the opening that Fanny expected, and there was a tenderness in the tone of his voice that almost softened her heart towards him; but she answered not a word,—perhaps she feared to trust her voice.

"I wish you would tell me, dearest, if any sorrow or vexation has chased away the bloom and the gladness that we all so loved to look upon. Tell me, Fanny, what is it that has changed you so sadly? You will not?—Then you do not love me as I love you; for I am sure if I had a sorrow I should open my heart to you."

"When a Christian has a sorrow, brother Charles, he should open his heart to the Lord, and not to a poor sinful mortal as wicked and as weak himself."

"But surely, my dear Fanny, that need not prevent a brother and sister from conversing with the greatest confidence together. How many texts I could quote you in which family unity and affection are inculcated in the Bible!"

"Pray do not quote the Bible," said Fanny in a voice of alarm, "till the right spirit has come upon you. It is a grievous sin to do it, or to hear it."

"Be assured, Fanny, that I feel quite as averse to quoting the Bible irreverently as you can do. But tell me why it is you think that

the right spirit, as you call it, is not come upon me?"

"As I call it!" repeated Fanny, shuddering. "It is not I, Charles,—it is one of the Lord's saints who says it; and it is a sin for me to listen to you."

It is doubtless Mr. Cartwright who says it, Fanny. Is it not so?"

"And who has so good a right to say it as the minister of your parish, and the friend and protector that the Lord has sent to your widowed mother?"

Poor Mowbray felt his heart swell. It was difficult to hear the man who had come between him and all his best duties and affections named in this manner as his own maligner, and restrain his just and natural indignation;—yet he did restrain it, and said in a voice of the utmost gentleness,

"Do you think, my beloved Fanny, that Mr. Cartwright's influence in this house has been for our happiness?"

May the Lord forgive me for listening to such words!" exclaimed Fanny, with that look

of nervous terror which her beautiful face now so often expressed. "But he can't! he can't! —I know it, I know it! It is my doom to sin, and you are only an agent of that enemy who is for ever seeking my soul to destroy it. —Leave me! leave me!"

"Fanny, this is dreadful! Can you really believe that the God of love and mercy will hold you guilty for listening to the voice of your brother? What have I ever done, my Fanny, to deserve to be thus driven from your presence?"

The unhappy girl looked bewildered. "Done!" she exclaimed. "What have you done?—Is not that works?—is not that of works you speak, Charles?—Oh! he knew, he foretold, he prophesied unto me that I should be spoken to of works, and that I should listen thereunto, to my everlasting destruction, if I confessed not my soul to him upon the instant. I must seek him out: he said IF,—oh, that dear blessed IF! Let go my arm, brother Charles! — let me seek my salvation!"

"Fanny, this is madness!"

She looked at him, poor girl, as he said this, with an expression that brought tears to his eyes. That look seemed to speak a dreadful doubt whether the words he had spoken were not true. She pressed her hand against her forehead for a moment, and then said in a voice of the most touching sadness,

"God help me!"

"Oh, Fanny!—darling Fanny!" cried the terrified brother, throwing his arms round her: "save us from the anguish of seeing you destroyed body and mind by this frightful, this impious doctrine! Listen to me, my own sweet girl! Think that from me you hear the voice of your father—of the good and pious Wallace—of your excellent and exemplary governess, and drive this maddening terror from you. Did you live without God in the world, Fanny, when you lived under their virtuous rule? How often have you heard your dear father say, when he came forth and looked upon the beauty of the groves and lawns, bright in the morning sunshine, 'Praise

the Lord, my children, for his goodness, for his mercy endureth for ever!' Did not these words raise your young heart to heaven more than all the frightful denunciations which have almost shaken your reason?"

"Works! works!—Oh, Charles, let me go from you! Your voice is like the voice of the serpent:—it creeps dreadfully near my heart, and I shall perish, everlastingly perish, if I listen to you. IF:—is there yet an IF for me now? Let me go, Charles: let me seek him;—if you love me, let me seek my salvation."

"Do you mean that you would seek Mr. Cartwright, Fanny? You do not mean to go to his house, do you?"

"His house? How little you know him, Charles! Think you that he would leave me and my poor mother to perish? Poor, poor Charles! You do not even know that this shepherd and guardian of our souls prays with us daily?"

"Prays with you? Where does he pray with you?"

"In mamma's dressing-room."

"And who are present at these prayers?"

"Mamma, and I, and Curtis, and Jem."

"Jem? Who is Jem, Fanny?"

"The new stable-boy that our minister recommended, Charles, when that poor deluded Dick Bragg was found walking in the fields with his sister Patty on the Sabbath."

"You don't mean that Dick Bragg is turned away? He was, without exception, the steadiest lad in the parish."

"Works! works!" exclaimed Fanny, wringing her hands. "Oh, Charles! how your poor soul clings to the perditiou of works!"

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Mowbray with great emotion, "where will all this end? What an existence for Helen, for Rosalind! Is there no cure for this folly,—this madness on one side, and this infernal craft and hypocrisy on the other?"

On hearing these words, Fanny uttered a cry which very nearly amounted to a scream, and running off towards the house with the

fleetness of a startled fawn, left her brother in a state of irritation and misery such as he had never suffered before.

The idea of seeing Sir Gilbert Harrington immediately had perhaps more comfort and consolation in it than any other which could have suggested itself, and the lanes and the fields which divided Oakley from Mowbray were traversed at a pace that soon brought the agitated young man to the baronet's door.

"Is Sir Gilbert at home, John?" he demanded of an old servant who had known him from childhood; but instead of the widely-opened door, and ready smile which used to greet him, he received a grave and hesitating "I don't know sir," from the changed domestic.

"Is Lady Harrington at home?" said Charles, vexed and colouring.

"It is likely she may be, Mr. Mowbray," said the old man relentingly. "Will you please to wait one moment, Master Charles? I think my lady can't refuse—"

Charles's heart was full; but he did

wait, and John speedily returned, saying almost in a whisper, "Please to walk, in sir; but you must go into my lady's closet,—that 's the only safe place, she says."

"Safe?" repeated Charles; but he made no objection to the taking refuge in my lady's closet, and in another moment he found himself not only in the closet, but in the arms of the good old lady.

"Oh, Lord!—if Sir Gilbert could see me!" she exclaimed after very heartily hugging the young man. "He 's a greater tiger than ever, Charles, and I really don't know which of us would be torn to pieces first;—but only tell me one thing before I abuse him any more:—how long have you been at home?"

"The coach broke down at Newberry," replied Charles, "and I did not get to Mowbray till nine o'clock last night."

"Thank God!" ejaculated Lady Harrington very fervently. "Then there 's hope in Israel at least for you.—But what on earth can you say to me of my beautiful Helen? Three months, Charles, three whole months since she

has been near me—and she knows I dote upon her, and that Sir Gilbert himself, untamable hyena as he is, has always been loving and gentle to her, as far as his nature would permit. Then why has she treated us thus? You can't wonder, can you, that he swears lustily every morning that ingratitude is worse than all the mortal sins put together?"

"I dare not throw the charge back upon you, my dear lady; and yet it *is* being ungrateful for poor Helen's true affection to believe it possible that she should so long have remained absent from you by her own free will. You know not, dearest Lady Harrington, what my poor Helen has to endure."

"Endure? What do you mean, Charles? Surely there is nobody living who dares to be unkind to her? My poor boy,—I am almost ashamed to ask the question, but you will forgive an old friend: is there any truth, Charles, in that damnable report? (God forgive me!) that horrid report, you know, about your mother?"

What report, Lady Harrington?" said

Mowbray, colouring like scarlet. "I have heard no report, excepting that which is indeed too sure and certain to be called a report;—namely, that she has become a violent Calvinistic Methodist."

"That 's bad enough, my dear Charles,—bad enough of all conscience; and yet I have heard of what would be worse still: I have heard, Charles, that she is going to be weak and wicked enough to marry that odious hypocritical Tartuffe, the Vicar of Wrexhill."

Mowbray put his hand before his eyes, as if he had been blasted by lightning, and then replied, as steadily as he could, "I have never heard this, Lady Harrington."

"Then I trust—I trust it is not true, Charles. Helen, surely, and that bright-eyed creature Miss Torrington, who have both, I believe, (for, God help me, I don't know!)—both, I believe, been staying all the time at Mowbray;—and surely—and surely, if this most atrocious deed were contemplated, they must have some knowledge of it."

"And that they certainly have not," returned

Charles with recovered courage; "for I sat with them both for two or three hours last night, listening to their miserable account of this man's detestable influence over my mother and Fanny; and certainly they would not have concealed from me such a suspicion as this, had any such existed in the breast of either."

"Quite true, my dear boy, and I can hardly tell you how welcome this assurance is to me—not for your mother's sake, Charles; if you cannot bear the truth, you must not come to me,—and on this point the truth is, that I don't care one single straw about your mother. I never shall forgive her for not answering Sir Gilbert's note. I know what the writing it cost him—dear, proud, generous-hearted old fellow! And not to answer it! not to tell her children of it! No, I never shall forgive her, and I should not care the value of a rat's tail if she were to marry every tub preacher throughout England, and all their clerks in succession—that is, not for her own sake. I dare say she'll preach in a tub herself

before she has done with it; but for your sakes, my dear souls, I do rejoice that it is not true."

"That would indeed complete our misery; and it is already quite bad enough, I assure you. The house, Helen says, is a perfect conventicle. The girls are ordered to sing nothing but psalms and hymns; some of the latter so offensively ludicrous, too, as to be perfectly indecent and profane. A long extempore sermon, or lecture as he calls it, is delivered to the whole family in the great drawing-room every night; missionary boxes are not only hung up beside every door, but actually carried round by the butler whenever any one calls; and a hundred and fifty other absurdities, at which we should laugh were we in a gayer mood: but this farce has produced the saddest tragedy I ever witnessed, in the effect it has had upon our poor Fanny. I have had some conversation with her this morning, and I do assure you that I greatly fear her reason is unsettled, or like to be so."

"God forbid, Charles! Pretty innocent young thing! that would be too horrible to think of."

The old lady's eyes were full of tears, a circumstance very unusual with her, but the idea suggested struck her to the heart; and she had not yet removed the traces of this most unwonted proof of sensibility, when a heavy thump was heard at the door of the closet.

"Who 's there?" said her ladyship in a voice rather raised than lowered by the emotion which dimmed her eyes.

"Let me in, my lady!" responded the voice of Sir Gilbert.

"What do you want, Sir Gilbert? I am busy."

"So I understand, my lady, and I 'm come to help you."

"Will you promise, if I let you in, not to hinder me, instead?"

"I 'll promise nothing, except to quarrel with you if you do not."

"Was there ever such a tyrant! Come in then; see, hear, and understand.

The door was opened, and Sir Gilbert Harrington and Charles Mowbray stood face to face.

Charles smiled, and held out his hand.

The baronet knit his brows, but the expression of his mouth told her experienced ladyship plainly enough that he was well enough pleased at the sight of his unexpected guest.

"He only got to Mowbray at nine o'clock last night," said Lady Harrington.

Sir Gilbert held out his hand. "Charles, I am glad to see you," said he.

"Thank God!" ejaculated the old lady.

"My dear Sir Gilbert," said Charles, "I have learnt your kind and friendly anger at the prolonged absence of my poor sister. The fault is not hers, Sir Gilbert; she has been most strictly forbidden to visit you."

"By her mother?"

"By her mother, Sir Gilbert."

"And pray, Charles, do you think it her duty to obey?"

"I really know not how to answer you. For a girl just nineteen to act in declared defiance

of the commands of her mother, and that mother her sole surviving parent, is a line of conduct almost too bold to advise. And yet, such is the lamentable state of infatuation to which my mother's mind appears to be reduced by the pernicious influence of this Cartwright, that I think it would be more dangerous still to recommend obedience."

"Upon my soul I think so," replied Sir Gilbert, in an accent that showed he thought the proposition too self-evident to be discussed. I have been devilish angry with the girls, — with Helen, I mean, — for I understand that little idiot, Fanny, is just as mad as her mother; but that Helen, and that fine girl, Rosalind Torrington, should shut themselves up with an hypocritical fanatic and a canting mad woman, is enough to put any man out of patience."

"The situation has been almost enough to put Helen in her grave; she looks wretchedly; and Miss Torrington is no longer the same creature. It would wring your heart to see these poor girls, Sir Gilbert; and what are they to do?"

"Come to us, Charles. Let them both come here instantly, and remain here till your mother's mad fit is over. If it lasts, I shall advise you to take out a commission of lunacy."

"The madness is not such as a physician would recognise, Sir Gilbert; and yet I give you my honour that, from many things which my sister and Miss Torrington told me last night, I really do think my mother's reason must be in some degree deranged. And for my poor little Fanny, six months ago the pride and darling of us all, she is, I am quite persuaded, on the verge of insanity."

"And you mean to leave her in the power of that distracted driveler, her mother, that the work may be finished?"

"What can I do, Sir Gilbert?"

"Remove them all. Take them instantly away from her, I tell you."

The blood rushed painfully to poor Mowbray's face. "You forget, Sir Gilbert," he said, "that I have not the means: you forget my father's will."

"No, sir; I do not forget it. Nor do I

forget either that, had I not in a fit of contemptible passion refused to act as executor, I might, I think it possible,—I might have plagued her heart out, and so done some good. I shall never forgive myself!"

"But you could have given us no power over the property, Sir Gilbert. We are beggars."

"I know it, I know it!" replied the old gentleman, clenching his fists. "I told you so from the first: and now mark my words,—she 'll marry her saint before she 's six months older."

"I trust that in this you are mistaken. The girls have certainly no suspicions of the sort."

"The girls are fools, as girls always are. But let them come here, I tell you, and we may save their lives at any rate."

"Tell them both from me, Charles, that they shall find a home, and a happy one, here; but don't let them chill that old man's heart again by taking no notice of this, and keeping out of his sight for another three months. He 'll have the gout in his stomach as sure as they 're born; just tell Helen that from me."

Mowbray warmly expressed his gratitude for their kindness; and though he would not undertake to promise that either Helen or Miss Torrington would immediately decide upon leaving his mother's house, in open defiance of her commands, he promised that they should both come over on the morrow, to be cheered and supported by the assurance of their continued friendship. He was then preparing to take his leave when Lady Harrington laid her hand upon his arm, saying,

"Listen to me, Charles, for a moment. Those dear girls, and you too, my dear boy, you are all surrounded with great difficulties, and some consideration is necessary as to how you shall meet them best. It won't do, Sir Gilbert; it will be neither right nor proper in any way for Helen to set off at once in utter and open defiance of Mrs. Mowbray. What I advise is, that Charles should go home, take his mother apart, and, like Hamlet in the closet scene, 'speak daggers, but use none.' It does not appear, from all we have yet heard, that any one has hitherto attempted to point out to

her the deplorable folly, ay, and wickedness too, which she is committing. I do not believe she would admit Sir Gilbert; and, to say the truth, I don't think it would be very safe to trust him with the job."

"D—n it! I wish you would," interrupted Sir Gilbert. "I should like to have the talking to her only just for an hour, and I 'd consent to have the gout for a month afterwards; I would, upon my soul!"

"Do be tame for a moment, you wild man of the woods," said her ladyship, laying her hand upon his mouth, "and let me finish what I was saying. No, no, Sir Gilbert is not the proper person; but you are Charles. Speak to her with gentleness, with kindness, but tell her *the truth*. If you find her contrite and yielding, use your victory with moderation; and let her down easily from her giddy elevation of saintship to the sober, quiet, even path of rational religion, and domestic duty. But if she be restive—if she still persist in forbidding Helen to visit her father's oldest friends, while making her own once happy home a prison, and a wretched one,

—then, Charles Mowbray, I would tell her roundly that she must choose between her children and her Tartuffe, and that if she keeps him she must lose you."

"Bravo! capital! old lady; if Charles will just say all that, we shall be able to guess by the result as to how things are between them, and we must act accordingly. You have your allowance paid regularly, Charles? I think she doubled it, didn't she, after your father died?"

Charles looked embarrassed, but answered, "Yes, Sir Gilbert, my allowance was doubled."

"D—n it, boy, don't answer like a jesuit.—Is it regularly paid?—That was my question, my main question."

"The first quarter was paid, Sir Gilbert; but before I left the University, instead of the remittance, I received a letter from my mother, desiring me to transmit a statement of all my debts to Stephen Corbold, Esq. solicitor, Wrexhill; and that they should be attended to; which would, she added, be more satisfactory to her than sending my allowance

without knowing how I stood with my tradesmen."

"And have you done this, my fine sir?" said Sir Gilbert, becoming almost purple with anger.

"No, Sir Gilbert, I have not."

The baronet threw his arms round him, and gave him a tremendous hug.

"I see you are worth caring for, my boy; I should never have forgiven you if you had. Audacious rascal! Why, Charles, that Corbold has been poking his snuffling, hypocritical nose, into every house, not only in your parish but in mine, and in at least a dozen others, and has positively beat poor old Gaspar Brown out of the field. The old man called to take leave of me not a week ago, and told me that one after another very nearly every client he had in this part of the world had come or sent to him for their papers, in order to deposit them with this canting Corbold; and, as I hear, all the little farmers for miles round are diligently going to law in the name of the Lord. But what did you do, my dear boy, for money?"

"Oh! I have managed pretty well. It was a disappointment certainly, and at first I felt a little awkward, for the letter did not reach me till I had ordered my farewell supper; and as in truth I had no tradesmen's bills to pay, I gave my orders pretty liberally, and of course have been obliged to leave the account unpaid,—an arrangement which to many others would have had nothing awkward in it at all; but as my allowance has been always too liberal to permit my being in debt during any part of the time I have been at college, the not paying my last bill there was disagreeable. However the people were abundantly civil, and I flatter myself that, without the assistance of Mr. Corbold, I shall be able to settle this matter before long."

"What is the sum you have left unpaid, Charles?" inquired the baronet bluntly.

"Seventy-five pounds, Sir Gilbert."

"Then just sit down for half a moment, and write a line enclosing the money; you may cut the notes in half if you think there is any danger."

And as he spoke he laid bank-notes to the amount of seventy-five pounds on her ladyship's botanical dresser.

Young Mowbray, who had not the slightest doubt of receiving his allowance from his mother as soon as he should ask her for it, would rather not have been under a pecuniary obligation even for a day; but he caught the eye of Lady Harrington, who was standing behind her impetuous husband, and received thence a perfectly intelligible hint that he must not refuse the offer. Most anxious to avoid renewing the coldness so recently removed, he readily and graciously accepted the offered loan, and thereby most perfectly re-established the harmony which had existed throughout his life between himself and the warm-hearted but impetuous Sir Gilbert.

"Now, then," said the old gentleman with the most cordial and happy good-humour, "be off, my dear boy; follow my dame's advice to the letter, and come back as soon as you conveniently can, to let us know what comes of it."

Cheered in spirit by this warm renewal of the friendship he so truly valued, young Mowbray set off on his homeward walk, pondering, as he went, on the best mode of opening such a conversation with his mother as Lady Harrington recommended; a task both difficult and disagreeable, but one which he believed it his duty not to shrink from.

CHAPTER XI.

CHARLES'S CONFERENCE WITH MRS. MOWBRAY.

Strolling in the shrubbery near the house, where for some time they had been anxiously awaiting his return, he met his eldest sister and Miss Torrington. Helen's first words were, "Are they angry with me?" and the reply, and subsequent history of the visit, filled her heart with gladness. "And now, my privy counsellors," continued Charles, "tell me at what hour you should deem it most prudent for me to ask my mother for an audience."

"Instantly!" said Rosalind.

"Had he not better wait till to-morrow?" said Helen, turning very pale.

"If my advisers disagree among themselves, I am lost," said Charles; "for I give you my word that I never in my whole life entered

upon an undertaking which made me feel so anxious and undecided. Let me hear your reasons for thus differing in opinion? Why, Rosalind, do you recommend such prodigious promptitude?"

"Because I hate suspense,—and because I know the scene will be disagreeable to you,—wherefore I opine that the sooner you get over it the better."

"And you, Helen, why do you wish me to delay it till to-morrow?"

"Because,—oh! Charles,—because I dread the result. You have no idea as yet how completely her temper is changed. She is very stern, Charles, when she is contradicted; and, if you should make her angry, depend upon it that it would be Mr. Cartwright who would dictate your punishment."

"My punishment! Nonsense, Helen! I shall make Miss Torrington both my Chancellor and Archbishop, for her advice has infinitely more wisdom in it than yours. Where is she? in her own dressing-room?"

"I believe so," faltered Helen.

"Well, then,—adieu for half an hour,—perhaps for a whole one. Where shall I find you when it is over?"

"In my dressing-room," said Helen.

"No, no," cried Rosalind; "I would not have to sit with you there for an hour, watching you quiver and quake every time a door opened, for my heiresship. Let us walk to the great lime-tree, and stay there till you come."

"And so envelop yourselves in a November woodland fog, wherein to sit waiting till about four o'clock! The wisdom lies with Helen this time, Miss Torrington; I think you have both of you been pelted long enough with falling leaves for to-day, and therefore I strongly recommend that you come in and wait for my communication beside a blazing fire. Have you no new book, no lively novel or fancy-stirring romance, wherewith to beguile the time?"

"Novels and romances! Oh! Mr. Mowbray,—what a desperate sinner you must be! The subscription at Hookham's has been out

these three months; and the same dear box that used to be brought in amidst the eager rejoicings of the whole family, is now become the monthly vehicle of Evangelical Magazines, Christian Observers, Missionary Reports, and Religious Tracts, of all imaginable sorts and sizes. We have no other modern literature allowed us."

"Poor girls!" said Charles, laughing; "what do you do for books?"

"Why, the old library supplies us indifferently well, I must confess; and as Fanny has changed her morning quarters from thence to the print-room, which is now converted into a chapel of ease for the vicar, we contrive to abduct from thence such volumes as we wish for without difficulty. But we were once very near getting a book, which, I have been told, is of the most exquisite interest and pathos of any in the language, by a pleasant blunder of Mrs. Mowbray's. I chanced to be in the room with her one day when she read aloud an old advertisement which she happened to glance her eye upon, stitched up in a Review of some

dozen years standing I believe, 'Some passages in the Life of Mr. Adam Blair, Minister of the Gospel.' 'That's a book we ought to have,' said she very solemnly; 'Rosalind, give me that list for Hatchard's, I will add this.' I took up the advertisement as she laid it down, and, not having it before her eyes, I suspect that she made some blunder about the title; for, when the box came down, I took care to be present at the opening of it, and to my great amusement, instead of the little volume that I was hoping to see, I beheld all Blair's works, with a scrap of paper from one of the shopmen, on which was written, 'Mrs. Mowbray is respectfully informed that the whole of Blair's works are herewith forwarded, but that J. P. is not aware of any other life of Adam than that written by Moses.' This was a terrible disappointment to me, I assure you."

They had now reached the house; the two girls withdrew their arms, and, having watched Charles mount the stairs, they turned into the drawing-room,—and from thence to the conservatory,—and then back again,—and then up

stairs to lay aside their bonnets and cloaks,—and then down again; first one and then the other looking at their watches, till they began to suspect that they must both of them stand still, or something very like it, so creepingly did the time pass during which they waited for his return.

On reaching the dressing-room door, Charles knocked, and it was opened to him by Fanny.

The fair brow of his mother contracted at his approach; and he immediately suspected, what was indeed the fact, that Fanny had been relating to her the conversation which had passed between them in the morning.

He rather rejoiced at this than the contrary, as he thought the conversation could not be better opened than by his expressing his opinions and feelings upon what had fallen from her during this interview. He did not, however, wish that she should be present, and therefore said,

"Will you let me, dear mother, say a few words to you tête-à-tête. Come, Fanny; run away, will you, for a little while?"

Fanny instantly left the room, and Mrs.

Mowbray, without answering his request, sat silently waiting for what he was about to say.

"I want to speak to you, mother, about our dear Fanny. I assure you I am very uneasy about her; I do not think she is in good health, either of body or mind."

"Your ignorance of medicine is, I believe, total, Charles," she replied dryly, "and therefore your opinion concerning her bodily health does not greatly alarm me; and you must pardon me if I say that I conceive your ignorance respecting all things relating to a human soul, is more profound still."

"I am sorry you should think so, dearest mother; but I assure you that neither physic nor divinity have been neglected in my education."

"And by whom have you been taught? Blind guides have been your teachers, who have led you, I fear, to the very brink of destruction. When light is turned into darkness, how great is that darkness!"

"My teachers have been those that my dear father appointed me, and I have never seen

any cause to mistrust either their wisdom or their virtue, mother."

"And know you not that your poor unhappy father was benighted, led astray, and lost by having himself listened to such teaching as he caused to be given to you? But you, Charles, if you did not harden your heart, even as the nether millstone, might even yet be saved among the remnant. Put yourself into the hands and under the training of the pious, blessed minister whom the Lord hath sent us. Open your sinful heart to Mr. Cartwright, Charles, and you may save your soul alive!"

"Mother!" said Charles with solemn earnestness, "Mr. Cartwright's doctrines are dreadful and sinful in my eyes. My excellent and most beloved father was a Protestant Christian, born, educated, and abiding to his last hour in the faith and hope taught by the established church of his country. In that faith and hope, mother, I also have been reared by him and by you; and rather than change it for the impious and frightful doctrines of the sectarian minister you name, who most dishonestly has

crept within the pale of an establishment whose dogmas and discipline he profanes, — rather, mother, than adopt this Mr. Cartwright's unholy belief, and obey his unauthorised and unscriptural decrees, I would kneel down upon the steps of God's altar and implore him to lay my bones beside my father's."

"Leave the room, Charles Mowbray!" exclaimed his mother almost in a scream; "let not the walls that shelter me be witness to such fearful blasphemy!"

"I cannot, and I will not leave you, mother, till I have told you how very wretched you are making me and my poor sister Helen by thus forsaking that form of religion in which from our earliest childhood we have been assustomed to see you worship God. Why,—why, dearest mother, should you bring this dreadful schism upon your family? Can you believe this to be your duty?"

"By what right, human or divine, do you thus question me, lost, unhappy boy? But I will answer you; and I trust the mercy of the Lord will visit me with for-

giveness for intercommuning with one who lives in open rebellion to his saints! Yes, sir; I do believe it is my duty to hold fast the conviction which the Lord, in his heavenly goodness, has sent me by the hand of his anointed. I do believe it is my duty to testify by my voice, and by every act of my life during the remaining time for which the Lord shall spare me for the showing forth of his glory, that I consider the years that are past as an abomination in the sight of the Lord; that my living in peace and happiness with your unawakened and unregenerate father was an abomination in the sight of the Lord; and that now, at the eleventh hour, my only hope of being received by Christ rests in my hating and abhorring, and forsaking and turning away from, all that is, and has been, nearest and dearest to my sinful heart!"

Charles listened to this rant with earnest and painful attention, and, when she ceased, looked at her through tears that presently overflowed his eyes.

"Have I then lost my only remaining pa-

rent?" said he. "And can you thus close your heart against me, and your poor Helen, my mother?"

"By the blessing of the Lord I am strong," replied the deluded lady, struggling to overcome God's best gift of pure affection in her heart. "By the blessing of Jesus, and by the earnest prayers of his holiest saint, I am able, wretched boy, to look at thee and say, Satan, avaunt! But the Lord tries me sorely," she continued, turning her eyes from the manly countenance of her son, now wet with tears. "Sorely, sorely, doomed and devoted boy, does he try me! But he, the Lord's vicar upon earth, the darling of the holy Jesus, the chosen shepherd, the anointed saint,—he, even he tells me to be of good cheer, for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

"Can you then believe, mother, that the merciful God of heaven and of earth approves your forsaking your children, solely because they worship him as they have been taught to do? Can you believe that he approves your turning your eyes and heart from them to de-

vote yourself to a stranger to your blood, a preacher of strange doctrine, and one who loves them not?"

"I have already told you, impious maligner of the holiest of men, that I know where my duty lies. I know, I tell you, that I not only know it, but will do it.—Torment me no more! Leave me, leave me, unhappy boy! leave me, that I may pray to the Lord for pardon for having listened to thee so long."

She rose from her seat, and approached him, as if to thrust him from the chamber; but he suffered her to advance without moving, and when she was close to him, he threw his arms round her, and held her for a moment in a close embrace. She struggled violently to disengage herself, and he relaxed his hold; but, dropping on his knees before her, at the same moment he exclaimed with passionate tenderness, "My dear, dear mother! have I then received your last embrace? Shall I never again feel your beloved lips upon my cheeks, my lips, my forehead? Mother! what can Helen and I do to win back your precious love?"

"Surely the Lord will reward me for this!" said the infatuated woman almost wildly. "Surely he will visit me with an exceeding great reward! and will he not visit thee too, unnatural son, for art not thou plotting against my soul to destroy it?"

"There is, then, no hope for us from the voice of nature, no hope from the voice of reason and of truth? Then hear me, mother, for I too must act according to the voice of conscience. Helen and I must leave you; we can no longer endure to be so near you in appearance, while in reality we are so fearfully estranged. You have been very generous to me in the sum which you named for my allowance at my father's death; and as soon as my commission is obtained, that allowance will suffice to support me, for my habits have never been extravagant. May I ask you to assign a similar sum to Helen? This will enable her to command such a home with respectable people as may befit your daughter; and you will not doubt, I think, notwithstanding the unhappy difference in our opinions on points of doctrine,

that I shall watch over her as carefully as our dear father himself could have done."

"He is a prophet! yea, a prophet!" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray; "and shall I be blind even as the ungodly, and doubt his word into whose mouth the Lord hath put the gift of prophecy and the words of wisdom? He hath spoken, and very terrible things are come to pass. Can your heart resist such proof as this, Charles?" she continued, raising her eyes and hands to heaven:—"even what you have now spoken, that did he predict and foretell you should speak!"

"He guessed the point, then, at which we could bear no more," replied Charles with bitterness: "and did he predict too what answer our petition should receive?"

"He did," returned Mrs. Mowbray either with real or with feigned simplicity; "and even that too shall be verified. Now, then, hear his blessed voice through my lips; and as I say, so must thou do. Go to your benighted sister, and tell her that for her sake I will wrestle with the Lord in prayer. With great and ex-

ceeding anguish of spirit have I already wrestled for her; but she is strong and wilful, and resisteth alway.—Nevertheless, I will not give her over to her own heart's desire; nor will I turn mine eyes from her. For a while longer I will endure, for so hath the Lord commanded by the lips of his anointed: and for you, unhappy son, I must take counsel of the Lord from the same holy well-spring of righteousness, and what he shall speak, look that it come to pass."

"You have denounced a terrible sentence against Helen, mother! For nearly two years, then, she must look forward to a very wretched life; but, without your consent, I cannot till she is of age remove her. Dear girl! she has a sweet and gentle spirit, and will, I trust, be enabled to bear patiently her most painful situation. But as for myself, it may be as well to inform Mr. Cartwright at once, through you, that any interference with me or my concerns will not be endured; and that I advise him, for his own sake, to let me hear and see as little of him as possible."

Mrs. Mowbray seemed to listen to these words in perfect terror, as if she feared a thunderbolt must fall and crush at once the speaker and the hearer of such daring impiety. But the spirit of Charles was chafed; and conscious perhaps that he was in danger of saying what he might wish to recall on the influence which his mother avowed that the vicar had obtained over her, he hastened to conclude the interview, and added: "I will beg you, ma'am, immediately to give me a draft for my quarter's allowance, due on the first of this month. I want immediately to send money to Oxford."

"Did I not tell you, Charles, to inform my man of business,—that serious and exemplary man, Mr. Corbold,—what money you owed in Oxford, and to whom? And did I not inform you at the same time that he should have instructions to acquit the same forthwith?"

"Yes, mother, you certainly did send me a letter to that effect; but as my father permitted me before I came of age to pay my own bills, and to dispose of my allowance as I thought fit, I did not choose to change my usual manner of

proceeding; and therefore left what I owed unpaid, preferring to remit the money myself. Will you please to give me the means of doing this now?"

"May the Lord be gracious to me and mine, as I steadily now, and for ever, refuse to do so great iniquity! Think you, Charles, that I, guided and governed, as I glory to say I am, by one sent near me by the providence of the Lord to watch over me now in my time of need,—think you that I will hire and pay your wicked will to defy the Lord and his anointed?"

"Do you mean, then, mother, to withdraw my allowance?" said Charles.

"I thank my Lord and Saviour that I do!" she replied, casting her eyes to heaven: "and humbly on my knees will I thank the blessed Jesus for giving me that strength, even in the midst of weakness!"

As she spoke, she dropped upon her knees on the floor, with her back towards her unhappy son. He remained standing for a few moments, intending to utter some nearly hope-

less words of remonstrance upon the cruel resolution she had just announced; but as she did not rise, he left the room, and with a heavy heart proceeded to look for Helen and her friend; though he would gladly have prepared himself by an hour of solitude for communicating tidings which had very nearly overthrown his philosophy. But he had promised to see them and to tell them all that passed; and he prepared to perform this promise with a heavier heart than his bosom had ever before been troubled. He shrank from the idea of appearing before Rosalind in a situation so miserably humiliating, for at this moment fears that the report mentioned by Lady Harrington might be true pressed upon him; and though his better judgment told him that such feelings were contemptible, when about to meet the eye of a friend he could not subdue them, and as he opened the drawing-room door, the youthful fire of his eye was quenched and his pale lip trembled.

"Oh! Charles, how dreadfully ill you look!" exclaimed Helen.

"What can have passed?" said Miss Torrington, looking almost as pale as himself.

"Much that has been very painful," he replied; "but I am ashamed at being thus overpowered by it. Tell me, both of you, without any reserve, have you ever thought—has the idea ever entered your heads, that my unfortunate mother was likely to marry Cartwright?"

"No,—never," replied Helen firmly.

"Yes," said Rosalind falteringly;—but less with the hesitation of doubt, than from fear of giving pain.

"Lady Harrington told me it was spoken of," said Mowbray with a deep sigh.

"It is impossible!" said Helen, "I cannot:—I will not believe it. Rosalind! if you have had such an idea, how comes it that you have kept it secret from me?"

"If, instead of darkly fearing it," replied Rosalind, "I had positively known it to be true, I doubt if I should have named it, Helen;—I could not have borne that words so hateful should have first reached the family from me."

"Has she told you it is so?" inquired Helen, her lips so parched with agitation that she pronounced the words with difficulty.

"No, dearest, she has not; and perhaps I am wrong both in conceiving such an idea, and in naming it. But her mind is so violently, so strangely wrought upon by this detestable man, that I can only account for it by believing that he is ——"

There was much filial piety in the feeling that prevented his finishing the sentence.

"It is so that I have reasoned," said Rosalind. "Heaven grant that we be both mistaken!—But will you not tell us, Charles, what it is that has suggested the idea to you? For Heaven's sake relate, if you can, what has passed between you?"

"If I can!—Indeed I doubt my power. She spoke of me as of one condemned of God."

Rosalind started from her seat.—"Do not go on, Mr. Mowbray!" she exclaimed with great agitation; "I cannot bear this, and meet her with such external observance and civility

as my situation demands. It can do us no good to discuss this wicked folly,—this most sinful madness. I, at least, for one, feel a degree of indignation—a vehemence of irritation on the subject, that will not, I am sure, produce good to any of us. She must go on in the dreadful path in which she has lost herself, till she meet something that shall shock and turn her back again. But all that can be done or said by others will but drive her on the faster, adding the fervour of a martyr to that of a convert."

"You speak like an oracle, dear Rosalind," said poor Mowbray, endeavouring to smile, and more relieved than he would have avowed to himself at being spared the task of narrating his downfall from supposed wealth to actual penury before her.

"She speaks like an oracle, but a very sad one," said Helen. "Nevertheless, we will listen and obey.—You have spoken to my mother, and what you have said has produced no good effect: to me, therefore, it is quite evident that nothing can. Were it not that the fearful use

which we hear made of the sacred name of God makes me tremble lest I too should use it irreverently, I would express the confidence I feel, that if we bear this heavy sorrow well, his care will be with us: and whether we say it or not, let us feel it. And now, Rosalind, we must redeem our lost time, and read for an hour or so upstairs. See! we have positively let the fire go out;—a proof how extremely injurious it is to permit our thoughts to fix themselves too intensely on anything:—it renders one incapable of attending to the necessary affairs of life.—There, Charles, is a sermon for you. But don't look so miserable, my dear brother; or my courage will melt into thin air."

"I will do my best to master it, Helen," he replied; "but I shall not be able to make a display of my stoicism before you this evening, for I must return to Oakley."

"Are you going to dine there? Why did you not tell me so?"

"If my conversation with my mother had ended differently, Helen, I should have post-

poned my visit till to-morrow; but as it is, it will be better for me to go now. I will drive myself over in the cab. I suppose I can have Joseph?" He rang the bell as he spoke.

"Let the cab be got ready for me in half an hour: and tell Joseph I shall want him to go out with me to dinner."

"The cab is not at home, sir," replied the servant.

"Is it gone to the coach-maker's?—What is the matter with it."

"There is nothing the matter with it, sir; but Mr. Cartwright has got it."

"Then let my mare be saddled. She is in the stable, I suppose?"

"Mr. Corbold has had the use of your mare, Mr. Charles, for more than a month, sir: and terribly worked she has been, Dick says."

"Very well—it 's no matter: I shall walk, William."

The servant retired, with an expression of more sympathy than etiquette could warrant. Helen looked at her brother in very mournful silence; but tears of indignant passion started

to the bright eyes of Rosalind. "Is there no remedy for all this?" she exclaimed. "Helen, let us run away together. They cannot rob me of my money, I suppose. Do ask Sir Gilbert, Charles, if I am obliged to stay here and witness these hateful goings-on."

"I will—I will, Miss Torrington. It would, indeed, be best for you to leave us. But my poor Helen,—she must stay and bear it."

"Then I shall stay too: and that I think you might guess, Mr. Mowbray."

Rosalind's tears overflowed as she spoke; and Charles Mowbray looked at her with that wringing of the heart which arises from thinking that all things conspire to make us wretched. When he was the reputed heir of fourteen thousand a year, he had passed whole weeks in the society of Rosalind, and never dreamed he loved her;—but now, now that he was a beggar, and a beggar too, as it seemed, not very likely to be treated with much charity by his own mother,—now that it would be infamy to turn his thoughts towards the heiress with any hope or wish that she should ever be

his, he felt that he adored her—that every hour added strength to a passion that he would rather die than reveal, and that without a guinea in the world to take him or to keep him elsewhere, his remaining where he was would expose him to sufferings that he felt he had no strength to bear.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VICAR'S PROGRESS, AND HIS COUNSEL TO FANNY AS TO THE BEST MEANS OF ASSISTING THE POOR.

When the family assembled at dinner, and Mrs. Mowbray perceived the place of her son vacant, she changed colour, and appeared discomposed and absent during the whole time she remained at table. This, however, was not long; for, a very few minutes after the cloth was removed, she rose, and saying, "I want you, Fanny," left the room with her youngest daughter without making either observation or apology to those she left. The result of this conference between the mother and daughter was the despatching a note to the Vicarage, which brought the vicar to join them with extraordinary speed.

Mrs. Mowbray then related with a good deal of emotion the scene which had taken place between herself and her son in the morning; concluding it with mentioning his absence at dinner, and her fears that, in his unregenerate state of mind, he might be led to withdraw himself altogether from a home where godliness had begun to reign, and where, by the blessing of the Lord Jesus, it would multiply and increase every day that they were spared to live.

When she had concluded, Mr. Cartwright remained for several minutes silent, his eyes fixed upon the carpet, his arms folded upon his breast, and his head from time to time moved gently and sadly to and fro, as if the subject on which he was meditating were both important and discouraging. At length he raised his eyes, and fixed them upon Fanny.

"My dear child," he said, "withdraw yourself, and pray, while your mother and I remain together. Pray for us, Fanny!—pray for both of us, that we may so do the duty appointed unto us by the Lord, as what we may decide to

execute shall redound to his glory, and to our everlasting salvation, world without end, amen!"

Fanny rose instantly, and clasping her innocent hands together, fervently exclaimed "I will!—I will!"

Having opened the door, and laid his delicate white hand upon her head, whispering an ardent blessing as she passed through it, he watched her as she retreated with a rapid step to her chamber anxious to perform the duty assigned her; and then closing and bolting it after her, he returned to the sofa near the fire, and seated himself beside Mrs. Mowbray.

"My friend!" said Mr. Cartwright, taking her hand; "my dear, dear friend! you are tried, you are very sorely tried. But it is the will of the Lord, and we must not repine at it: rather let us praise his name alway!"

"I do!" ejaculated the widow with very pious emotion; "I do praise and bless his holy name for all the salvation he hath vouchsafed to me, a sinner—and to my precious Fanny with me. Oh, Mr. Cartwright, it is very dear

to my soul to think that I shall have that little holy angel with me in paradise! But be my guide and helper"—and here the good and serious lady very nearly returned the pressure with which her hand was held,—"oh! be my guide and helper with my other misguided children! Tell me, dear Mr. Cartwright, what must I do with Charles?"

"It is borne in upon my mind, my dear and gentle friend, that there is but one chance left to save that deeply-perilled soul from the everlasting gulf of gnawing worms and of eternal flame."

"Is there one chance?" exclaimed the poor woman in a real ecstasy. "Oh! tell me what it is, and there is nothing in the wide world that I would not bear and suffer to obtain it."

"He must abandon the profession of arms, and become a minister of the gospel."

"Oh! Mr. Cartwright, he never will consent to this. From his earliest childhood, his unhappy and unawakened father taught him to glory in the thought of fighting the battles of his country; and with the large fortune he

must one day have, is it not probable that he might be tempted to neglect the cure of souls? And then, you know, Mr. Cartwright, that the last state of that man would be worse than the first."

Mr. Cartwright dropped the lady's hand and rose from his seat. "I must leave you, then," he said, his rich voice sinking into a tone of the saddest melancholy. "I must not—I may not give any other counsel; for in doing so, I should betray my duty to the Lord, and betray the confidence you have placed in me. Adieu, then, beloved friend! adieu for ever! My heart—the weak and throbbing heart of a man is even now heaving in my breast. That heart will for ever forbid my speaking with harshness and austerity to you. Therefore, beloved but too feeble friend, adieu! Should I stay longer with you, that look might betray me into forgetfulness of everything on earth—and heaven too!"

The three last words were uttered in a low and mournful whisper. He then walked towards the door, turned to give one last look,

and having unfastened the lock and shot back the bolt, was in the very act of departing, when Mrs. Mowbray rushed towards him, exclaiming "Oh, do not leave us all to everlasting damnation! Save us! save us! Tell me only what to do, and I will do it."

In the extremity of her eagerness, terror, and emotion, she fell on her knees before him, and raising her tearful eyes to his, seemed silently to reiterate the petition she had uttered.

Mr. Cartwright looked down upon her, turned away for one short instant to rebolt the door, and then, raising his eyes to heaven, and dropping on his knees beside her, he threw his arms around her, impressed a holy kiss upon her brow, exclaiming in a voice rendered tremulous, as it should seem, by uncontrollable agitation, "Oh, never! never!"

After a few moments unavoidably lost by both in efforts to recover their equanimity, they rose and reseated themselves on the sofa.

The handkerchief of Mrs. Mowbray was at her eyes. She appeared greatly agitated, and totally unable to speak herself, sat in trembling

expectation of what her reverend friend should say next.

It was not immediately, however, that Mr. Cartwright could recover his voice; but at length he said, "It is impossible, my too lovely friend, that we can either of us any longer mistake the nature of the sentiment which we feel for each other. But we have the comfort of knowing that this sweet and blessed sentiment is implanted in us by the will of the Lord—holy and reverend be his name! And if it be sanctified to his honour and glory, it becometh the means of raising us to glory everlasting in the life to come. Wherefore, let us not weep and lament, but rather be joyful and give thanks that so it hath seemed good in his sight!"

Mrs. Mowbray answered only by a deep sigh, which partook indeed of the nature of a sob; and by the continued application of her handkerchief, it appeared that she wept freely. Mr. Cartwright once more ventured to take her hand; and that she did not withdraw it, seemed to evince such a degree of Christian

humility, and such a heavenly-minded forgiveness of his presumption, that the pious feelings of his heart broke forth in thanksgiving.

"Praise and glory to the Lord alway!" he exclaimed, "your suffering sweetness, dearest Clara, loveliest of women, most dearly-beloved in the Lord,—your suffering sweetness shall be bruised no more! Let me henceforward be as the shield and buckler that shall guard thee, so that thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. And tell me, most beloved! does not thy spirit rejoice, and is not thy heart glad, even as my heart, that the Lord hath been pleased to lay his holy law upon us—even upon thee and me?"

"Oh, Mr. Cartwright!" replied the agitated Mrs. Mowbray, "I know not what I can—I know not what I ought to do. May the Lord guide me!—for, alas! I know not how to guide myself!"

"And fear not, Clara, but he will guide thee! for he hath made thee but a little lower than the angels, and hath crowned thee

with glory and honour. And tell me, thou highly-favoured of the Lord, doth not thy own heart teach thee, that heart being taught of him, that I am he to whom thou shouldst look for comfort now in the time of this mortal life? Speak to me, sweet and holy Clara. Tell me, am I deceived in thee? Or art thou indeed, and wilt thou indeed be mine?"

"If I shall sin not by doing so, I will, Mr. Cartwright; for my spirit is too weak to combat all the difficulties I see before me. My soul trusts itself to thee—be thou to me a strong tower, for I am afraid."

"Think you, Clara, that he who has led you out of darkness into the way of life would now, for the gratification of his own earthly love, become a stumbling-block in thy path? My beloved friend! how are you to wrestle and fight for and with that misguided young man, who hath now, even now, caused you such bitter sufferings? He is thine; therefore he is dear to me. Let me lead him, even as I have led thee, and his spirit too, as well as thine and Fanny's, shall rejoice in the Lord his Saviour!"

"Then be it so!" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray. "Promise me only to lead Helen also into life everlasting, and not to leave the poor benighted Rosalind for ever in darkness, and I will consent, Mr. Cartwright, to be your wife!"

Nothing could be more satisfactory than the vicar's answer to this appeal, and had not the good Mrs. Mowbray been too generous to exact a penalty in case of failure, there can be little doubt but that he would willingly have bound himself under any forfeiture she could have named, to have ensured a place in heaven, not only to all those she mentioned, but to every individual of her household, the scullion and stable-boys included.

The great question answered of "To be or not to be the husband of Mrs. Mowbray?" the vicar began to point out to her in a more composed and business-like manner the great advantages both temporal and spiritual which must of necessity result to her family from this arrangement; and so skilfully did he manage her feelings and bend her mind to his purpose, that when at length he gave her lips the fare-

well kiss of affianced love, and departed, he left her in the most comfortable and prayerful state of composure imaginable. In about ten minutes after he was gone, she rang her bell, and desired that Miss Fanny might come to her; when, without exactly telling her the important business which had been settled during the time she passed upon her knees, she gave her to understand that Mr. Cartwright had probably thought of the only means by which all the unhappy disagreements in the family could be settled.

"Indeed, mamma, I prayed for him," said Fanny, lifting her eyes to Heaven; "I prayed most earnestly, that the Holy Spirit might bring him wisdom to succour you according to your wish, and therein to heal all our troubles."

"And your prayers have been heard, my dear child; and the Lord hath sent him the wisdom that we all so greatly needed.—Have they had tea in the drawing-room, Fanny?"

"I don't know, mamma. I have been kneeling and praying all the time."

"Then, my dear, you must want refreshment. Go down and tell them that I am not quite well this evening, and shall therefore not come down again; but they may send me some tea by Curtis."

"I hope you are not very ill, my dearest mother?" said Fanny, looking anxiously at her.

"No, dear, — not very ill — only a little nervous."

* * * * * *

While these scenes passed at Mowbray Park, poor Charles was relieving his heart by relating, without reserve, what had passed between him and his mother. His first words on entering the library, where Sir Gilbert and Lady Harrington were seated, were, "Have you sent that letter to Oxford, Sir Gilbert?"

"Yes, I have," was the reply. "But why do you inquire, Charles?"

"Because, if you had not, I would have begged you to delay it."

"And why so?"

In reply to this question, young Mowbray

told all that had passed; observing, when his painful tale was ended, that such being his mother's decision, he intended to apply immediately to Corbold for the money he wanted.

"Not you, by Jove, Charles! You shall do no such thing, I tell you! What! knuckle and truckle to this infernal gang of hypocrites?. You shall do no such thing. Just let me know all that is going on in the garrison, and if I don't counter-plot them, I am a Dutchman."

"Puff not up your heart, Sir Knight, with such vain conceits," said Lady Harrington. "You will plot like an honest man, and the Tartuffe will plot like a rogue. I leave you to guess which will do the most work in the shortest time. Nevertheless, you are right to keep him out of the way of these people as long as you can."

Notwithstanding the heavy load at his heart which Mowbray brought with him to Oakley, before he had passed an hour with his old friends his sorrows appeared lighter, and his

hopes from the future brighter and stronger. Sir Gilbert, though exceedingly angry with Mrs. Mowbray, still retained some respect for her; and, spite of all his threatening hints to the contrary, he no more believed that the widow of his old friend would marry herself to the Reverend William Jacob Cartwright, than that he, when left a widower by my lady, should marry the drunken landlady of the Three Tankards at Ramsden. He therefore spoke to Charles of his present vexatious embarrassments as of all evils that must naturally clear away, requiring only a little temporary good management to render them of very small importance to him. Of Helen's situation, however, Lady Harrington spoke with great concern, and proposed that she and Miss Torrington should transfer themselves from the Park to Oakley as soon as Charles joined his regiment, and there remain till Mrs. Mowbray had sufficiently recovered her senses to make them comfortable at home.

Before the young man left them, it was set-

tled that Colonel Harrington should immediately exert himself to obtain the commission so long promised; a service in the performance of which no difficulty was anticipated, as the last inquiries made on the subject at the Horse-Guards were satisfactorily answered.

"Meanwhile," said the baronet as he wrung his hand at parting, "give not way for one single inch before the insolent interference of these canters and ranters: remember who and what you are, and that you have a friend who will make the county too hot to hold any one, male or female, who shall attempt to shake or shackle you in your natural rights. Treat your mother with the most perfect respect and politeness; but make her understand that you are your father's son, and that there is such a thing as public opinion, which, on more occasions than one, has been found as powerful as any other law of the land. Cheer the spirits of the poor woe-begone girls as much as you can; and tell Helen that her duty to her father's memory requires that she should not neglect her father's friends. And now good night,

Charles! Come to us as often as you can; and God bless you, my dear boy!"

By this advice young Mowbray determined to act; and wishing to escape any discussion upon lesser points, he avoided all tête-à-tête conversations with his mother, kept as much out of Mr. Cartwright's way as possible, turned his back upon the serious attorney whenever he met him, and devoted his time to walking, reading, and singing, with Miss Torrington and his sister Helen, while waiting to receive the news of his appointment. When this should arrive, he determined once more to see his mother in private, and settle with her, on the best footing he could, the amount and manner of his future supplies.

This interval, which lasted nearly a month, was by no means an unhappy one to Charles. He had great confidence in the judgment of Sir Gilbert Harrington, and being much more inclined to believe in his mother's affection than to doubt it, he resolutely shut his eyes upon whatever was likely to annoy him, and gave himself up to that occupation which beyond

all others enables a man or a woman either to overlook and forget every other,—namely, the making love from morning to night.

The manner in which this undeclared but very intelligible devotion of the heart was received by the fair object of it was such, perhaps, as to justify hope, though it by no means afforded any certainty that the feeling was returned. Even Helen, who fully possessed her brother's confidence, and had hitherto, as she believed, fully possessed the confidence of Rosalind also,—even Helen knew not very well what to make of the varying symptoms which her friend's heart betrayed. That Miss Torrington took great pleasure in the society of Mr. Mowbray, it was impossible to doubt; and that she wished him to find pleasure in hers, was equally clear. His favourite songs only were those which she practised in his absence and sang in his presence; he rarely praised a passage in their daily readings which she might not, by means of a little watching, be found to have read again within the next twenty-four hours. The feeble winter-blossoms from the

conservatory, of which he made her a daily offering, might be seen preserved on her toilet in a succession of glasses, and only removed at length by a remonstrance from her maid, who assured her that "stale flowers were unwholesome; though, to be sure, coming out of that elegant conservatory did make a difference, no doubt." Yet even then, the bouquet of a week old was not permitted to make its exit till some aromatic leaf or still green sprig of myrtle had been drawn from it, and deposited somewhere or other, where its pretty mistress, perhaps, never saw it more, but which nevertheless prevented her feeling that she had thrown the flowers he had given her on Sunday in the breakfast-room, or on Monday in the drawing-room, &c. &c. &c., quite away.

Yet, with all this, it was quite impossible that Charles, or even Helen, who knew more of these little symptomatic whims than he did, could feel at all sure what Rosalind's answer would be if Mr. Mowbray made her a proposal of marriage.

From time to time words dropped from Ro-

salind indicative of her extreme disapprobation of early marriages both for women and men, and declaring that there was nothing she should dread so much as forming a union for life with a man too young to know his own mind. When asked by Charles at what age she conceived it likely that a man might attain this very necessary self-knowledge, she answered with a very marked emphasis,

"Decidedly not till they are many years older than you are, Mr. Mowbray."

Even to her own heart Rosalind would at this time have positively denied, not only that she loved Charles Mowbray, but that Charles Mowbray loved her. She was neither insensible nor indifferent to his admiration, or to the pleasure he took in her society; but she had heard Charles's judgment of her on her arrival more than once repeated in jest. He had said, that she was neither so amiable as Helen, nor so handsome as Fanny. To both of these opinions she most sincerely subscribed, and with such simple and undoubting acquiescence, that it was only when she began to read

in his eyes the legible "I love you," that she remembered his having said it. Then her woman's heart told her, that inferior though she might be, it was not her husband that must be the first to discover it; and superior as he was,—which she certainly was not disposed to deny,—it was not with such disproportionate excellence that she should be most likely to form a happy union.

Had Mowbray guessed how grave and deeply-seated in Rosalind's mind were the reasons which would have led her decidedly to refuse him, this flowery portion of his existence would have lost all its sweetness. It was therefore favourable to his present enjoyment that, confident as he felt of ultimately possessing the fortune to which he was born, he determined not to propose to Rosalind till his mother had consented to assure to him an independence as undoubted as her own. The sweet vapour of hope, therefore,—the incense with which young hearts salute the morning of life,—enveloped him on all sides: and pity is it that the rainbow-tinted mist should ever be blown away

from those who, like him, are better, as well as happier, for the halo that so surrounds them!

Many a storm is preceded by a calm,—many a gay and happy hour only gives the frightful force of contrast to the misery that follows it.

Mr. Cartwright having once and again received the plighted faith of Mrs. Mowbray, for the present confined his operations solely to the gentle task of urging her to hasten his happiness, and the assurance of eternal salvation to all her family.

But here, though the obstacles he had to encounter were of a soft and malleable nature, easily yielding to the touch, and giving way at one point, they were yet difficult to get rid of altogether; for they were sure to swell up like dough, and meet him again in another place.

Thus, when he proved to the pious widow that the Lord could never wish her to delay her marriage till her year of mourning was out, seeing that his honour and glory, his worship and service, would be so greatly benefited and increased thereby, she first agreed perfectly in his view of the case as so put, but immediately

placed before him the violent odium which they should have to endure from the opinion of the world. And then, when his eloquence had convinced her, that it was sinful for those who set not their faith in princes, nor in any child of man, to regulate their conduct by such worldly considerations, — though she confessed to him that as their future associations would of course be wholly and only among the elect, she might perhaps overcome her fear of what her neighbours and unregenerate acquaintance might say, yet nevertheless she doubted if she could find courage to send orders to her milliner and dress-maker for coloured suits, even of a sober and religious tint, as it was so very short a time since she had ordered her half-mourning.

It was more difficult perhaps to push this last difficulty aside than any other; for Mr. Cartwright could not immediately see how to bring the great doctrine of salvation to bear upon it.

However, though the lady had not yet been prevailed upon to fix the day, and even at in-

tervals still spoke of the eligibility of waiting till the year of mourning was ended, yet on the whole he had no cause to complain of the terms on which he stood with her, and very wisely permitted the peace of mind which he himself enjoyed to diffuse itself benignly over all the inhabitants of the Park and the Vicarage.

Henrietta, who throughout the winter had been in too delicate a state of health to venture out of the house, was permitted to read what books she liked at the corner of the parlour-fire; while Mr. Jacob, far from being annoyed by any particular strictness of domestic discipline, became extremely like the wind which bloweth where it listeth, wandering from farm-house to farm-house—nay, even from village to village, without restriction of any kind from his much-engaged father.

Fanny, however, was neither overlooked nor neglected; though to have now led her about to little tête-à-tête prayer-meetings in the woods was impossible. First, the wintry season forbad it; and secondly, the very particular and important discussions which business rendered

necessary in Mrs. Mowbray's dressing-room—or, as it had lately been designated, Mrs. Mowbray's morning parlour—must have made such an occupation as difficult as dangerous.

At these discussions Fanny was never invited to appear. She prayed in company with her mother and Mr. Cartwright, and some of the most promising of the domestics, for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening; but the manner in which the interval between these two prayings was spent showed very considerable tact and discrimination of character in the Vicar of Wrexhill.

Soon after the important interview which has been stated to have taken place between the lady of the manor and the vicar had occurred, Mr. Cartwright having met Fanny on the stairs in his way to her mamma's morning parlour, asked her, with even more than his usual tender kindness, whether he might not be admitted for a few minutes into her "study;" for it was thus that *her* dressing-room was now called by as many of the house-

hold as made a point of doing everything that Mr. Cartwright recommended.

"Oh yes," she replied with all the zealous piety which distinguishes the sect to which she belonged, whenever their consent is asked to do or suffer anything that nobody else would think it proper to do or suffer,—"Oh, yes!—will you come now, Mr. Cartwright?"

"Yes, my dear child, it is now that I wish to come;"—and in another moment the Vicar of Wrexhill and his beautiful young parishioner were sitting tête-à-tête on the sofa of the young lady's dressing-room.

As usual with him on all such occasions, he took her hand. "Fanny!" he began,—"dear, precious Fanny! you know not how much of my attention—how many of my thoughts are devoted to you!"

"Oh! Mr. Cartwright, how very, very kind you are to think of me at all!"

"You must listen to me, Fanny," (he still retained her hand,) "you must now listen to me with very great attention. You know I think

highly of your abilities — indeed I have not scrupled to tell you it was my opinion that the Lord had endowed you with great powers for his own especial service and glory. That last hymn, Fanny, confirms and strengthens me in this blessed belief, and I look upon you as a chosen vessel of the Lord. But, my child, we must be careful that we use, and not abuse, this exceeding great mercy and honour. Your verses, Fanny, are sweet to my ear, as the songs of the children of Israel to those who were carried away captive. But not for me—not for me alone, or for those who, like me, can taste the ecstasy inspired by holy song, has the Lord given unto you that power which is to advance his kingdom upon earth. The poor, the needy, those of no account in the reckoning of the proud—they have all, my dearest Fanny, a right to share in the precious gift bestowed on you by the Lord. Wherefore, I am now about to propose to you a work to which the best and the holiest devote their lives, but on which you have never yet tried your young

strength:—I mean, my dearest child, the writing of tracts for the poor."

"Oh! Mr. Cartwright! Do you really think it possible that I can be useful in such a blessed way?"

"I am sure you may, my dear Fanny; and you know this will be the means of doing good both to the souls and bodies of the Lord's saints. For what you shall write, will not only be read to the edification and salvation of many Christian souls, but will be printed and sold for the benefit either of the poor and needy, or for the furthering such works and undertakings as it may be deemed most fit to patronise and assist."

"Oh! Mr. Cartwright! If I could be useful in such a way as that, I should be very thankful to the Lord;—only—I have a doubt."

Here the bright countenance of Fanny became suddenly overclouded; she even trembled and turned pale.

"What is it, my dear child, that affects you thus?" said the vicar with real surprise; "tell

me, my sweet Fanny, what I have said to alarm you?"

"If I do this," said Fanny, her voice faltering with timidity, "shall I not seem to be trusting to works?"

"Do you mean because the writings of authors are called their works?" said Mr. Cartwright very gravely.

"No! Mr. Cartwright!" she replied, colouring from the feeling that if so good and holy a man could quiz, she should imagine that he was now quizzing her,—"No! Mr. Cartwright!—but if I do this, and trust to get saving grace as a reward for the good I may do, will not this be trusting to works?"

"My dear child," he said, gently kissing her forehead, "such tenderness of conscience is the best assurance that what you will do will be done in a right spirit. Then fear not, dear Fanny, that those things which prove a snare to the unbeliever should in like manner prove a snare to the elect."

Again Fanny Mowbray trembled. "Alas!

then I may still risk the danger of eternal fire by this thing,—for am I of the elect?"

The vicar knew that Mrs. Mowbray was waiting for him, and fearing that this long delay might have a strange appearance, he hastily concluded the conversation by exclaiming with as much vehemence as brevity, "You are! You are!"

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. SIMPSON'S CHARITABLE VISIT.—CHARLES'S TROUBLES CONTINUE.

From this time most of Fanny Mowbray's hours were spent in writing tracts; which, as soon as completed, were delivered to Mr. Cartwright. He received them ever with expressions of mingled admiration and gratitude, constantly assuring her the next time they met, that nothing could be more admirably calculated to answer the effect intended, and that the last was incomparably superior to all which had preceded it.

This occupation of writing tracts, first hit upon for the convenient occupation of Fanny Mowbray, was soon converted by the ready wit of Mr. Cartwright into an occupation in one way or another for all the professing

Christians in his parish who happened to have nothing to do.

Those who are at all acquainted with the manner in which the "Church Methodists," as they are called, obtain the unbounded influence which they are known to possess in their different parishes, particularly over the female part of their congregations, must be aware, that great and violent as the effect of their passionate extempore preaching often is, it is not to that alone that they trust for obtaining it. From the time Mr. Cartwright became Vicar of Wrexhill, he had been unremitting in his exertions of every kind to obtain power, influence, and dominion throughout the parish, and, on the whole, had been pretty generally successful. How far his handsome person and pleasing address contributed to this, it is not here necessary to inquire; but it is certain that he drew upon these advantages largely in his intercourse with the females in general, and with the ladies in particular. But though at first this particular species of devotion was exceedingly agreeable to him, both in its exer-

cise and its success, he now found very considerable inconvenience from the difficulty of keeping up the frequency of his pastoral visits to his fair converts without giving more time to them than was consistent with his infinitely more important avocations at the Park.

As soon, however, as he perceived how completely the writing of tracts occupied Fanny Mowbray during the time that was formerly bestowed upon listening to his sentimental divinity, he determined that several others of his female parishioners should dispose of their superfluous time in the same manner.

Within twenty-four hours after he came to this decision, the three Misses Richards had, each and every of them, purchased a quire of foolscap paper, a quarter of a hundred of goose-quills, with a bottle of ink, and a Concordance to the Bible, in common between them. Miss Stokes too, the little blue-eyed milliner, and Mrs. Knighton, the late postmaster's widow, and Mrs. Watkins, the haberdasher's wife, were all furnished with abundant materials of the same value; and all of them

determined to give up every earthly thing, if it were necessary, rather than disappoint the dear, blessed Mr. Cartwright of the comfort of receiving anything he expected from them.

The widow Simpson, and even her little holy Minima, had also employment found for them; which though it could but ill supply to that regenerate lady the loss of Mr. Cartwright's society, which at this particular time she was in a great degree deprived of, served nevertheless to soothe her by the conviction, that though not seen, she was remembered.

The part of the business consigned to Mrs. Simpson was the selling the tracts. It was not without surprise that the people of the neighbourhood, particularly the unawaked, saw the parlour-windows of "the principal person in the village" disfigured by a large square paper, looking very much as if it announced lodgings to let, but which upon closer examination proved to be inscribed as follows: "Religious tracts, hymns, and meditations sold here, at one penny each, or ninepence halfpenny for the dozen."

Miss Minima's duty was to hold in her hand a square box, with a slit cut in the lid thereof, in which all who purchased the tracts were requested to deposit their money for the same; and when the customer's appearance betokened the possession of more pennies than their purchase required, the little girl was instructed to say,

"One more penny, please ma'am, (or sir,) for the love of the Lord."

Thus, for the pleasant interval of a few weeks, everything went on smoothly. Helen, at the earnest request of her brother, and convinced by his arguments, as well as those of Lady Harrington and Rosalind, that under existing circumstances it was right to do so, made several morning visits to Oakley.

Had she been questioned concerning this, she would most frankly have avowed both the act and the motives for it. But no such questionings came. Charles himself dined there repeatedly, but was never asked why he absented himself, nor where he had been.

During this period, Mrs. Mowbray seemed to encourage rather more than usual the intercourse of the family with their Wrexhill neighbours. The season being no longer favourable for walking, the Mowbray carriage was to be seen two or three times in a week at Mrs. Simpson's, Mrs. Richards's, and the Vicarage; but it often happened, that though Mrs. Mowbray proposed a visit to Wrexhill while they were at the breakfast-table, and that the coachman immediately received orders to be at the door accordingly, when the time arrived her inclination for the excursion was found to have evaporated, and the young people went thither alone.

Upon one occasion of this kind, when, Fanny being deeply engaged in the composition of a tract, and Charles gone to Oakley, Miss Torrington and Helen had the carriage to themselves, they agreed that instead of making the proposed visit to Mrs. Simpson, they should go to inquire for a little patient of Helen's, the child of a poor hard-working woman,

who had long been one of her pensioners at Wrexhill.

The entrance to the house was by a side door from a lane too narrow to permit the carriage to turn; the two young ladies therefore were put down at the corner of it, and their approach was unheard by those who occupied the room upon which the door of the house opened, although it stood ajar. But as they were in the very act of entering, they were stopped by words so loud and angry, that they felt disposed to turn back and abandon their charitable intention altogether.

But Rosalind's ear caught a sound that made her curious to hear more; and laying her hand on Helen's arm, and at the same time making a sign that she should be silent, they stood for a moment on the threshold, that they might decide whether to retreat or advance.

"You nasty abominable woman, you!" these were the first words which distinctly reached them; "you nasty untidy creature! look at the soap-suds, do, all splashed out upon the ground! How can you expect a

Christian lady, who is the principal person in the parish, to come and look after your nasty dirty soul, you untidy pig, you?"

"Lord love you, my lady! 'tis downright unpossible to keep one little room neat, and fit for the like of you, when I have the washing of three families to do in it,—the Lord be praised for it!—and to cook my husband's bit of dinner, and let three little ones crawl about in it, besides."

"Stuff and nonsense!" responded the principal person in the village; "whoever heard of washing making people dirty? Look here,—put out your hand, can't you? I am sure I shall come no nearer to you and your tub. Take these three tracts, and take care you expound them to your husband; and remember that you are to bring them back again in one month without a single speck of dirt upon them."

"You be sent by the new vicar, beant you, Madam Simpson?" inquired the woman.

"Sent, woman? I don't know what you mean by 'sent.' As a friend and joint labourer

with Mr. Cartwright in the vineyard of the Lord, I am come to take your soul out of the nethermost pit; but if you will persist in going on soaping and rubbing at that rate instead of listening to me, I don't see that you have any more chance of salvation than your black kettle there. Mercy on me! I shall catch my death of cold here! Tell me at once, do you undertake to expound these tracts to your husband?"

"Dear me! no, my lady; I was brought up altogether to the washing line."

"What has that to do with it, you stupid sinner? I can't stay any longer in this horrid, damp, windy hole: but take care that you expound, for I insist upon it; and if you don't, you may depend upon it Mr. Cartwright won't give you one penny of the sacrament money."

So saying, the pious lady turned away and opened the door upon Miss Torrington and Helen.

Conscious, perhaps, that her *Christian duty* had not been performed in so lady-like a manner as it might have been, had she known that

any portion of the Park family were within hearing, the principal person in the village started and coloured at seeing them; but, aware how greatly she had outrun the two young ladies in the heavenly race, she immediately recovered herself and said,

"I am afraid, young ladies, that your errand here is not the same as mine. Betty Thomas is a poor sinful creature, and I hope you are not going to give her money till she is reported elect, Miss Mowbray? It will really be no less than a sin against the Holy Ghost if you do."

"She has a sick child, Mrs. Simpson," replied Helen, "and I am going to give her money to buy what will make broth for it."

Helen then entered the room, made her inquiries for the little sufferer, and putting her donation into sinful Betty Thomas's soapy hand, returned to Mrs. Simpson and Rosalind, who remained conversing at the door.

It was raining hard, and Miss Mowbray asked Mrs. Simpson if she should take her home.

"That is an offer that I won't refuse, Miss

Mowbray, though I am within, and you are without, the pale. But I am terribly subject to catching cold; and I do assure you that this winter weather makes a serious Christian's duty very difficult to do. I have got rid of seventy tracts since first of December."

"You sell the tracts, do you not, Mrs. Simpson?" said Rosalind.

"Yes, Miss Torrington,—I sell them and lend them, and now and then give them, when I think it is a great object to have them seen in any particular house."

"Have you collected much, ma'am, by the sale?"

"Not a very large sum as yet, Miss Torrington; but I am getting on in many different ways for the furtherance of the Lord's work. Perhaps, ladies, though you have not as yet put your own hands to the plough that shall open the way for you to a place among the heavenly host, you may like to see my account?"

"I should like it very much, Mrs. Simpson," said Rosalind.

The lady then drew from her reticule a small pocket-book, from which she read several items, which from various sources contributed, as she said, "to fill a bag for the Lord," to be expended upon his saints by the hands of their pious vicar.

By the time this interesting lecture was finished, the carriage had reached Mrs. Simpson's door, and having set her down, was ordered home.

"Now will I give Charles a *pendant* to the exquisite poetical effusion which he bestowed on me some time since," said Rosalind, drawing forth pencil and paper from a pocket of the carriage, in which Mrs. Mowbray was accustomed of late to deposit what the vicar called "sacred memoranda;" by which were signified all the scraps of gossip respecting the poor people among whom she distributed tracts, that she could collect for his private ear.

Having invoked the Sisters Nine for the space of five minutes, she read aloud the result to Helen, who declared herself willing to give testimony, if called upon, to the faithful ren-

dering (save and except the rhymes) of the financial document to which they had just listened.

> Sixpence a week paid by each serious pew
> In Mr. Cartwright's church, makes—one pound two;
> From Wrexhill workhouse, by a farthing rate
> Collected by myself, just one pound eight;
> Crumbs for the Lord, gather'd from door to door
> Through Hampshire, makes exactly two pound four;
> From twelve old ladies, offerings from the hive
> In various sums, amount to three pound five;
> From our new Sunday school, as the Lord's fee,
> By pennies from each child, we 've shillings three;
> And last of all, and more deserving praise
> Than all the sums raised by all other ways,
> "The desperate Sinner's certain Road to Heaven,"
> Sold at the gallows foot,—thirteen pound seven.

"This is a new accomplishment," said Helen, laughing; "and I declare to you, Rosalind, I think it very unnecessary, Catholic-like, and unkind, to perform any more works of supererogation in that fascinating style upon the heart of poor Charles. I am afraid he has had more than is good for him already."

"I do not think the beauty of my verses will at all tend to injure Mr. Mowbray's peace

of mind," replied Rosalind rather coldly. "However, we can watch their effects, you know, and if we see any alarming symptoms coming on, we can withdraw them."

Just before they reached the lodge-gates, they perceived Charles on foot before them; and stopping the carriage, Helen made him get in, just to tell them, as she said, how her dear godmother was, what kind messages she had sent her, and though last, not least, whether any tidings had been heard of the commission.

Charles appeared to be in excellent spirits; repeated many pleasant observations uttered by Sir Gilbert on the effervescent nature of his mother's malady; told them that a commission in the Horse-Guards was declared to be at his service as soon as the money for it was forthcoming, for which, if needs must, even Sir Gilbert had permitted him to draw on Mr. Corbold; and finally, that he believed they had all alarmed themselves about Mr. Cartwright and his pernicious influences in a very young and unreasonable manner.

On reaching the house, they entered the library, which was the usual winter sitting-room; but it was quite deserted. They drew round the fire for a few minutes' further discussion of the news and the gossip which Charles had brought; and, apropos of some of the Oakley anecdotes of the evangelical proceedings at Wrexhill, Helen requested Rosalind to produce her version of Mrs. Simpson's deeds of grace.

"Willingly," replied Miss Torrington, drawing the paper from her pocket. "You dedicated a poem to me, Mr. Mowbray, some weeks ago; and I now beg to testify my gratitude by presenting you with this."

Charles took the paper, and while fixing his eyes with a good deal of meaning upon the beautiful giver, kissed it, and said, "Do you make it a principle, Miss Torrington, to return in kind every offering that is made you?"

"That is *selon*," she replied, colouring, and turning round to say something to Helen: but she was gone.

"Rosalind!" said Charles, thrusting her

paper unread into his bosom. "This commission, though we hail it as good fortune, will yet put an end to by far the happiest period of my existence, unless—I may hope, Rosalind, that—if ever the time should come—and I now think it will come—when I may again consider myself as the heir to a large property, I may hope that you will some day suffer me to lay this property at your feet."

"Never lay your property at the feet of any one, Mr. Mowbray," she replied carelessly.

Charles coloured and looked grievously offended. "You teach me at least, Miss Torrington, to beware how I venture again to hope that you would accept anything I could lay at yours."

"Nay, do not say so, Mr. Mowbray: I accept daily from you most willingly and gratefully unnumbered testimonies of friendship and good will; and if their being kindly welcomed will ensure their continuance, you will not let them cease."

"I am a coxcomb for having ever hoped for more," said Charles, leaving the room with

cheeks painfully glowing and a heart indignantly throbbing. He had not looked for this repulse, and his disappointment was abundantly painful. Over and over again had he decided, while holding counsel with himself on the subject, that he would not propose to Rosalind till his mother had made him independent; but these resolutions were the result rather of a feeling of generosity than of timidity. Yet Charles Mowbray was no coxcomb. Miss Torrington was not herself aware how many trifling but fondly-treasured symptoms of partial liking she had betrayed towards him during the last few weeks; and as it never entered his imagination to believe that she could doubt the reality of his strong attachment, he attributed the repulse he had received, as well as all the encouragement which led him to risk it, as the result of the most cruel and cold-hearted coquetry.

It is probable that he left Rosalind little better satisfied with herself than he was with her; but unfortunately there is no medium by which thoughts carefully hid in one bosom can be made to pour their light and warmth into

another, and much misery was in this instance, as well as in ten thousand others, endured by each party, only for want of understanding what was going on in the heart of the other.

Mowbray determined not to waste another hour in uncertainty as to the manner in which his commission was to be paid for, and his future expenses supplied. But in his way to his mother, he delayed long enough to say to Helen,

"I have proposed, and been most scornfully rejected, Helen. How could we either of us ever dream that Miss Torrington showed any more favour to me than she would have done to any brother of yours, had he been a hunch-backed idiot?"

Without waiting to receive any expression either of surprise or sympathy, he left his sister with the same hurried abruptness with which he sought her, and hastened on to find his mother.

She was sitting alone, with a bible on one side of her, and two tracts on the other. In her hand was a little curiously-folded note, such as she now very constantly received at

least once a day, even though the writer might have left her presence in health and perfect contentment one short hour before.

She started at the sudden entrance of her son, and her delicately pale face became as red as a milkmaid's as she hastily placed the note she was reading between the leaves of her bible. But Charles saw it not; every pulse within him was beating with such violence, that it required all the power left him to speak that which he had to say. Had his mother been weighing out a poison, and packets before her labelled for himself and his sisters, he would not have seen it.

"Mother," he said, "I have received notice that the commission in the Horse-Guards which my father applied for some time before he died is now ready for me. Will you have the kindness to furnish me with the means of paying for it? and will you also inform me on what sum I may reckon for my yearly expenses? I mean to join immediately."

Mrs. Mowbray's little agitation had entirely subsided, and she answered with much so-

lemnity, "You come to me, Charles, in a very abrupt manner, and apparently in a very thoughtless frame of mind, to speak on subjects which to my humble capacity seem fraught with consequences most awfully important.—The Horse-Guards! Oh! Charles! is it possible you can have lived for many weeks in such a regenerated family as mine, and yet turn your thoughts towards a life so profane as that of an officer in the Horse-Guards?"

"Let my life pass where it may, mother, I trust it will not be a profane one. I should ill repay my father's teaching if it were. This is the profession which he chose for me; it is the one to which I have always directed my hopes, and it is that which I decidedly prefer. I trust, therefore, that you will not object to my following the course which my most excellent father pointed out to me."

"I shall object to it, sir: and pray understand at once, that I will never suffer the intemperate pleadings of a hot-headed young man to overpower the voice of conscience in my heart."

Poor Mowbray felt inclined to exclaim,

"When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions."

For a moment he remained perfectly silent, and then said, "This is very terrible news for me, mother. You shall hear, I trust, no intemperate pleadings, but I hope you will let me reason with you on the subject. Surely you will not blame me for wishing in this, and in all things, to adhere as closely as may be to my dear father's wishes?"

"If your poor father, Charles, groped through life surrounded on all sides with outer darkness, is that any reason that I should suffer the son he left under my care and control to do so likewise? When he left the whole of my property at my whole and sole disposal, it was plain that he felt there was more hope of wisdom abiding in me than in you. It is herein, and herein only, that I must labour to do according to his wishes and his will, and endeavour so to act that all may see his confidence in me was not misplaced."

"For God's sake, mother! think well before

you determine upon disappointing all my hopes in this most cruel manner; and believe me, that no lookers-on between you and me—except perhaps the mischievous fanatic who has lately chosen to meddle so impertinently in our affairs—but will feel and say that I have been ill treated."

Had Mowbray not been stung and irritated as he was before this conversation, it is probable he would not have remonstrated thus warmly with a mother, whom he had ever accustomed to treat with the most tender observance and respect.

She looked at him with equal anger and astonishment, and remained for some time without speaking a word, or withdrawing her eyes from his face. If her son felt inclined to quote Shakspeare at the beginning of the conversation, she might have done so at the end of it; for all she wished to say was comprised in these words:

"Nay, then, I 'll send those to you that can speak."

She did not, however, express herself exactly

thus, but ended her long examination of his flushed and agitated countenance by pronouncing almost in a whisper,

"This is very terrible! But I thank the Lord I am not left quite alone in the world!"

Having thus spoken, she rose and retired to her bed-room, leaving her very unhappy son in possession of her "morning parlour," and of more bitter thoughts than had ever before been his portion.

Having continued for some moments exactly in the position in which she left him, he at length started up, and endeavouring to rouse himself from the heavy trance that seemed to have fallen on him, he hastened to find Helen.

"It is all over with me, Helen!" said he. "You know what I met with in the library;—and now my mother protests against my accepting my commission, because she says that officers lead profane lives. What is to become of me, Helen?"

"Have patience, dearest Charles! All this cannot last. It cannot be supposed that we can submit ourselves to the will of Mr. Cart-

wright: and depend upon it that it is he who has dictated this refusal. Do not look so very miserable, my dear brother! I think you would do very wisely if you returned to Oakley to dinner,—for many reasons."

"God bless you, love, for the suggestion!" It will indeed be a relief to me. I know not at this moment which I most desire to avoid —my mother, or Miss Torrington. Have you seen her—Rosalind, I mean?"

"No, Charles,—not since you parted from her. I heard her enter her room and lock the door. The answer you have received from her surprises me more, and vexes me more, than even my mother's."

"God bless you, Helen! you are a true sister and a true friend. I will go to Sir Gilbert;—but it rains hard—I wish I had the cab, or my own dear mare to ride. But that's a minor trouble;—it irks me though, for it comes from the same quarter."

"It does indeed;—and it irks me too, believe me. But patience, Charles!—courage and patience will do much."

"Will it give me the heart of the woman I love, Helen?—or rather, will it give her a heart? It is that which galls me. I have been deceived—trifled with, and have loved with my whole heart and soul a most heartless, fair-seeming coquette."

"That you have not, Charles!" replied Helen warmly; "that you have not! I too have mistaken Rosalind's feelings towards you. Perhaps she has mistaken them herself: but she is not heartless; and above all, there is no seeming about her."

"How I love you for contradicting me, Helen!—and for that bright flush that so eloquently expresses anger and indignation at my injustice! But if she be not a coquette, then must I be a most consummate puppy; for as I live, Helen, I thought she loved me."

"I cannot understand it. But I know that Rosalind Torrington is warm-hearted, generous, and sincere; and whatever it is which has led us to misunderstand her, either now or

heretofore, it cannot be coquetry, or false-seeming of any kind."

"Well—be it so: I would rather the fault were mine than hers. But I will not see her again to-day if I can help it. So good-b'ye, Helen: my lady must excuse my toilet;—I cannot dress and then walk through Oakley lane."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ENTRY.

It was very nearly midnight when Mowbray returned from his visit to Sir Gilbert Harrington's. To his great surprise, he found Helen waiting for him, even in the hall; for the moment she heard the door-bell she ran out to meet him.

"Why are you up so late, Helen?" he exclaimed: "and for God's sake tell me what makes you look so pale.—Where is Rosalind?"

"She is in bed;—she has been in tears all day; I made her go to bed. But, oh, Charles! my mother!—she has left the house."

"Gracious Heaven! what do you mean? Did she leave the house in anger? Did she ask for me?"

"No, Charles: nor for me either!"

"And where on earth is she gone?"

"No one in the house has the remotest idea: it is impossible even to guess. But she has taken Fanny and Curtis with her."

"When did she set out?"

"While Rosalind and I were eating our miserable, melancholy dinner. Mr. Cartwright, I find, called after you went, and was shown, as usual, to her dressing-room; but he did not stay, Thomas says, above half an hour, for he both let him in and out. Soon after he went away, Fanny was sent for; and she and Curtis remained with her till a few minutes before dinner-time. Curtis then went into the kitchen, it seems, and ordered a tray to be taken for my mother and Fanny into the dressing-room, and the only message sent to Rosalind and me was, that mamma was not well, and begged not to be disturbed. Curtis must have seen the coachman and settled everything with him very secretly; for not one of the servants, except the new stable-boy, knew that the carriage was ordered."

"How are we to interpret this, Helen?—Such a night too!—as dark as pitch. Had I not known the way blindfold, I should never have got home. I left Sir Gilbert in a rage because I would not sleep there;—but my heart was heavy; I felt restless and anxious at the idea of remaining from you during the night: I think it was a presentiment of this dreadful news.—Oh! what a day has this been to me! So gay, so happy in the morning! so supremely wretched before night!—I can remember nothing that I said which could possibly have driven her to leave her home. What can it mean, Helen?"

"Alas! Charles, I have no power to answer you. If asking questions could avail, might I not ask what I have done? And yet, at the moment of her leaving home for the night, she sent me word that I was *not to disturb her!*"

"The roads too are so bad! Had she lamps, Helen?"

"Oh yes. Some of the maids, while shutting up the rooms upstairs, saw the lights moving very rapidly towards the lodges."

"It is an inexplicable and very painful mystery. But go to bed, my dearest Helen! you look most wretchedly ill and miserable."

"Ill?—No, I am not ill Charles, but miserable; yes, more miserable than I have ever felt since my poor father's death was first made known to me."

The following morning brought no relief to the anxiety which this strange absence occasioned. Rosalind joined the brother and sister at breakfast, and her jaded looks more than confirmed Helen's report of the preceding night. Charles, however, hardly saw her sufficiently to know how she looked, for he carefully avoided her eyes; but if the gentlest and most soothing tone of voice, and the expression of her almost tender sympathy in the uneasiness he was enduring, could have consoled the young man for all he had suffered and was suffering, he would have been consoled.

The day passed heavily; but Helen looked so very ill and so very unhappy, that Charles could not bear to leave her; and though a mutual feeling of embarrassment between himself and Rosa-

lind made his remaining with them a very doubtful advantage, he never quitted them.

But it was quite in vain that he attempted to renew the occupations which had made the last six weeks pass so delightfully. He began to read; but Helen stopped him before the end of the page, by saying, "I cannot think what is the reason of it, Charles, but I cannot comprehend a single syllable of what you are reading."

Rosalind, blushing to the ears, and actually trembling from head to foot, invited him to play at chess with her. Without replying a word, he brought the table and set up the men before her; but the result of the game was, that Charles gave Rosalind checkmate, and it was Helen only who discovered it.

At an early hour they separated for the night; for the idea of waiting for Mrs. Mowbray seemed equally painful to them all, and the morrow's sun rose upon them only to bring a repetition of the sad and restless hours of the day that was past. Truly might they have said they were weary of conjecture; for so completely had they exhausted every supposi-

tion to which the imagination of either of the party could reach, without finding one on which common sense would permit them to repose, that, by what seemed common consent, they ceased to hazard a single "maybe" more.

They were sitting with their coffee-cups before them, and Rosalind was once more trying to fix the attention of Charles, as well as her own, to the chess-board, when a lusty pull at the door-bell produced an alarm which caused all the servants in the house to jump from their seats, and one half the chessmen to be overturned by the violent start of Rosalind.

A few moments of breathless expectation followed. The house door was opened, and the steps of several persons were heard in the hall, but no voice accompanied them. Helen rose, but trembled so violently, that her brother threw his arms round her and almost carried her to a sofa. Rosalind stood beside her, looking very nearly as pale as herself; while Charles made three steps forward and one back again, and then stood with his hands clasped and his

eyes fixed on the door in a manner which showed that, in spite of his manhood, he was very nearly as much agitated as his companions.

The next sound they heard was the voice of the lady of the mansion, and she spoke loud and clear, as she laid her hand on the lock, and partly opening the door, said, addressing the butler, who with half a dozen other serving-men had hurried to answer the bell,

"Chivers! order all the servants to meet me in this room immediately; and fail not to come yourself."

Mowbray had again stepped forward upon hearing his mother's voice, but stopped short to listen to her words; and having heard them, he turned back again, and placing himself behind the sofa on which Helen sat, leaned over it to whisper in her ear—"Let me not see you overcome, Helen! and then I shall be able to bear anything."

As he spoke, the door was thrown widely open, and a lady entered dressed entirely in white and very deeply veiled, followed by Fanny Mowbray and Mr. Cartwright.

A heavy sense of faintness seized on the heart of Helen, but she stood up and endeavoured to advance; Rosalind, on the contrary, stepped back and seated herself in the darkest corner of the room; while Charles hastily walked towards the veiled lady, and in a voice thick from emotion, exclaimed, "My mother!"

"Yes, Charles!" she replied; "your mother; but no longer a widowed, desolate mother, shrinking before the unnatural rebuke of her son. I would willingly have acted with greater appearance of deliberation, but your conduct rendered this impossible. Mr. Cartwright! permit me to present you to this hot-headed young man and his sister, as my husband and their father."

This terrible but expected annunciation was received in total silence. Mowbray seemed to think only of his sister; for without looking towards the person thus solemnly presented to him, he turned to her, and taking her by the arm, said, "Helen! — you had better sit down."

Fanny, who had entered the room immedi-

ately after her mother, looked pale and frightened; but though she fixed a tearful eye on Helen, she attempted not to approach her.

Mr. Cartwright himself stood beside his bride, or rather a little in advance of her; his tall person drawn up to its greatest height. Meekness, gentleness, and humility appeared to have his lips in their keeping; but unquenchable triumph was running riot in his eyes, and flashed upon every individual before him with a very unequivocal and somewhat scornful air of authority.

This tableau endured till the door was again thrown open, and one by one the servants entered, forming at last a long line completely across the room. When all were in their marshalled places, which here, as elsewhere, were in as exact conformity to the received order of precedence as if they had been nobles at a coronation, the lady bride again lifted her voice and addressed them thus:

"I have called you all together on the present occasion in order to inform you that Mr. Cartwright is my husband and your master.

I hope it is unnecessary for me to say that everything in the family must henceforward be submitted solely to his pleasure, and that his commands must on all occasions supersede those of every other person. I trust you will all show yourselves sensible of the inestimable blessing I have bestowed upon you in thus giving you a master who can lead you unto everlasting life; and as I have married for the glory of God, so I trust to receive his blessing upon the same, and to see every member of my family advancing daily under the guidance of their earthly master's hand to that state which shall ensure them favour from their heavenly one in the life to come. Amen! Repeat, I beg you—all of you repeat with me Amen!"

Though there were some throats there in which Amen would have stuck, there were enough present besides these to get up a tolerably articulate Amen.

Mr. Cartwright then stepped forward, and laying his hat and gloves on the table, said aloud, "Let us pray!"

The obedient menials knelt before him,

—all save one. This bold exception was the housekeeper; a staid and sober person of fifty years of age, who during the dozen years she had presided over the household, had constantly evinced a strict and conscientious adherence to her religious duties, and was, moreover, distinguished for her uniformly respectful, quiet, and unobtrusive demeanour. But she now stepped forward from her place at the head of the line, and said in a low voice, but very slowly and distinctly,

"I cannot, sir, on this occasion kneel down to pray at your bidding. This is not a holy business at all, Mr. Cartwright; and if you were to give me for salary the half of what you are about to wring from the orphan children of my late master, (deceased just eight calendar months ago,) I would not take it, sir, to live here and witness what I cannot but look upon as great sin."

The good woman then gave a sad look at Helen and her brother who were standing together, dropped a respectful curtsey as her eyes rested on them, and then left the room.

"Her sin be on her own head!" said Mr. Cartwright as he himself kneeled down upon a footstool which stood near the table. He drew a cambric handkerchief from his pocket, gave a preparatory "hem," and apparently unconscious that Miss Torrington had darted from the remote corner in which she had been ensconced and followed the housekeeper out of the room, remained for a moment with his eyes fixed on Mowbray and Helen, who remained standing.

"It would be a frightful mockery for us to kneel!" said Charles, drawing his sister back to the sofa she had quitted. "Sit down with me, Helen; and when we are alone, we will pray to God for strength to endure as we ought to do whatever calamity it is his will to try us with."

The bride was kneeling beside her husband; but she rose up and said, "You are of age, Charles Mowbray, and too stiff-necked and wilful to obey your mother: but you, Helen, I command to kneel."

She then replaced herself with much solem-

nity; and Helen knelt too, while breathing a silent prayer to be forgiven for what she felt to be profanation.

Charles stood for a moment irresolute, and then said, dropping on his knees beside her, "God will pardon me for your sake, dear Helen,—even for kneeling at a service that my heart disclaims."

Mr. Cartwright hemmed again, and began.

"I thank thee, O Lord! that by thy especial calling and election I am placed where so many sinful souls are found, who through and by me may be shown the path by which to escape the eternal pains of hell. But let thy flames blaze and burn, O Lord! for those who neglect so great salvation! Pour down upon them visibly thy avenging judgments, and let the earth see it and be afraid. To me, O Lord! grant power, strength, and courage to do the work that is set before me. Let me be a rod and a scourge to the ungodly; and let no sinful weakness on the part of the wife whom thou hast given me come across or overshadow the light received from thee through the Holy

Ghost for the leading of the rebellious back unto thy paths. Bless, O Lord! my virtuous wife; teach her to be meekly obedient to my word, and to thine through me; and make her so to value the inestimable mercy of being placed in the guiding hands of thy elected servant, that the miserable earthly dross which she maketh over to me in exchange for the same may seem but as dirt and filthiness in her sight! May such children as are already born unto her be brought to a due sense of thy exceeding mercy in thus putting it into their mother's heart to choose thine elected servant to lead them through the dangerous paths of youth;—make them rejoice and be exceeding glad for the same, for so shall it be good in thy sight!"

This terrible thanksgiving, with all its minute rehearsing of people and of things, went on for a considerable time longer; but enough has been given to show the spirit of it. As soon as it was ended, the new master of the mansion rose from his knees, and waiting with an appearance of some little impatience till his

audience had all recovered their feet, he turned to his bride with a smile of much complacency, and said,

"Mrs. Cartwright, my love, where shall I order Chivers to bring us some refreshments? Probably the dining-room fire is out. Shall we sup here?"

"Wherever you please," answered the lady meekly, and blushing a little at the sound of her new name pronounced for the first time before her children.

This address and the answer to it were too much for Helen to endure with any appearance of composure. She hid her face in her handkerchief as she passed her mother, and giving Fanny, who was seated near the door, a hasty kiss, left the room, followed by her brother.

Helen ran to the apartment of Rosalind; and Mowbray ran with her, forgetful, as it seemed, of the indecorum of such an unauthorised intrusion at any time, and more forgetful still of the icy barrier which had seemed to exist between him and its fair inhabitant since the first expression of his love and of his hope had been

so cruelly chilled by her light answer to it. But in this moment of new misery everything was forgotten but the common sorrow: they found Rosalind passionately sobbing, and Mrs. Williams, the housekeeper, weeping very heartily beside her.

"Oh, my Helen!" exclaimed the young heiress, springing forward to meet her; "Williams says they cannot take my money from me. Will you let us divide my fortune and live together?"

"Williams forgets your age, Rosalind," replied Helen: but though there was pain in recalling this disqualifying truth, there was a glance of pleasure too in the look with which Helen thanked her; and Charles, as he gazed on her swollen eyes and working features, felt that, cruel as she had been to him, she must ever be the dearest, as she was the best and the loveliest, being in the world.

And there was assuredly comfort, even at such a moment, in the devoted friendship of Rosalind, and in the respectful but earnest expressions of affection from the good house-

keeper; but the future prospects of Charles and his sisters was one upon which it was impossible to look without dismay.

"What ought we to do?" said Helen, appealing as much to her old servant as her young friend. "Can it be our duty to live with this hypocritical and designing wretch, and call him *father*?"

"No!" replied Rosalind vehemently. "To do so would be shame and sin."

"But where can the poor girls take refuge? You forget, Miss Torrington, that they are penniless," said Charles.

"But I am not penniless, sir," replied Rosalind, looking at him with an expression of anger that proceeded wholly from his formal mode of address, but which he interpreted as the result of a manner assumed to keep him at a distance.

"May I venture to say one word, my dear children, before I take my leave of you?" said Mrs. Williams.

"Oh yes!" said Helen, taking her by the hand, "I wish you would give us your advice,

Williams: we are too young to decide for ourselves at such a dreadful moment as this."

"And for that very reason, my dear Miss Helen, I would have you wait a little before you decide at all. Master Charles,—I beg his pardon—Mr. Mowbray,—is altogether a different consideration; and if so be it is any way possible for him, I think he should leave, and wait for the end elsewhere: but for you and poor Miss Fanny, my dear young lady, I do think you must learn to bear and forbear till such time as you may leave your misguided mamma, and perhaps accept this noble young lady's offer, and share her great fortune with her,—for a time I mean, Miss Helen,—for it can't be but my mistress will come to her senses sooner or later, and then she will remember she is a mother; and she will remember too, take my word for it, the noble-hearted, but too confiding gentleman, who was your father."

Tears flowed from every eye, for poor Mowbray was no exception, at this allusion to the beloved father, the gentle master, and the friendly guardian; but this did not prevent

the good woman's words from having their full weight,—it rather added to it, for it brought back the vivid remembrance of one in whose temper there was no gall.

"It will be hard to bear, Williams," replied Helen; "but I do indeed believe that you are right, and that, for a time at least, this cruelly changed house must be our home. But do you know that in the midst of all our misery, I have one comfort,—I think poor Fanny will be restored to us. Did you see the expression of her lovely face as she looked at us, Charles? Even you did not look more miserable."

"And if that be so, Miss Helen, it may atone for much; for it was a grievous sight to see the poor innocent child taking all Mr. Cartwright's brass for gold. If she has got a peep at his cloven foot, I shall leave you almost with a light heart—for I have grieved over her."

"I will take all the comfort I can, Williams, from your words, and will follow your counsel too, upon one condition; and that is, nobody

must prevent my setting off betimes to-morrow morning, as you and I did, Rosalind, once before, for Oakley. If my dear godmother advises me as you do, Williams, I will return and quietly put my neck into this hateful yoke, and so remain till Heaven shall see fit to release me."

"Heaven knows, I shall not oppose that plan," said Rosalind eagerly; "for, to my judgment, it is the very best you can pursue."

"Indeed I think so," added Charles; "and, dark and dismal as the mornings are, I would advise you, Helen, to set out before the time arrives for either accepting or refusing the general summons to join the family breakfast-table."

"And may I go too?" said Rosalind with a glance half reproachful at Charles for the manner in which he seemed to avoid speaking to her.

"May you, Rosalind?" cried Helen. "For pity's sake, do not fancy it possible that I can do anything without you now: I should feel that you were forsaking me."

"I never forsake any one that I have ever loved," said Rosalind with emotion, "whatever you or any one else may think to the contrary."

"Well, then, we will all three go together. But you little thought, Rosalind, when you first came here, that you would have to trudge through muddy lanes and under wintry skies for want of a carriage: but on this occasion, at least, we will not ask Mr. Cartwright to permit us the use of one of his."

"Then go to bed, my dear young ladies," said Mrs. Williams, "that you may be early up to-morrow: and let me hear from you, Miss Helen. I shall not go from Wrexhill, at least not till I know a little how you will settle everything. I will take Mrs. Freeman's pretty little rooms, that you always admire so much, Master Charles; and there I will stay for the present."

"Oh! that beautiful little cottage that they call the Mowbray Arms!" said Rosalind. "How we shall envy her, Helen!"

The party then separated; for the good

housekeeper most strenuously opposed Rosalind's proposition of passing the night with her friend.

"You would neither of you sleep a wink, ladies, if you bide together. And now, though there is more sorrow with you than such young hearts ought to have, yet you will sleep when you have nobody to talk to about it; for what makes old folks wake and watch, will often make young folks sleep."

And the good woman's prediction proved true; though the sleep that followed the tremendous blow they had received was too feverish and full of dreams to make the waking feel like that delightful return to new life and new joy which the waking of the young should ever be.

CHAPTER XV.

WALK TO OAKLEY.—DOMESTIC ARRANGEMENTS.—THE VILLAGE INN.

Fortunately for their proposed expedition, the morning broke more brightly than a December morning could reasonably be expected to do, and the trio set off on their walk to Oakley almost as soon as it was light. The expedition, notwithstanding the unhappy cause of it, would have been less silent and less sad, had not Charles thought Rosalind capricious and cruel, and had not Rosalind thought Charles unkind and cold.

Nothing could appear more likely to perpetuate the unfortunate misunderstanding between them than the heavy misfortune that had fallen upon Mowbray. His total dependence, contrasted with Miss Torrington's wealth, was

perpetually recurring to him, producing a degree of restraint in his manner that cut Rosalind to the heart, and roused all her womanly pride to prevent the long-combated feeling of attachment to which his present sorrows gave tenfold strength from betraying itself.

The tripping lightly through summer paths, and the picking one's way through wintry lanes, are two very different operations; and notwithstanding their early rising, they found the baronet and his lady already at the breakfast-table.

The astonishment occasioned by their appearance was great, but yet it was a joyous astonishment, and it was some time before Sir Gilbert's noisy welcome subsided sufficiently for her ladyship's more quiet and more anxious inquiries could be either answered or heard.

At length there was something in the tone of Helen's voice, the glance of Rosalind's eye, and the silent pressure of Mowbray's hand, which awakened his attention.

"Why, you have walked over to see us, my

dear girls, and it was behaving like a pair of little angels to do so; but you're not one half as well pleased to see me as I am to see you. Come here, Helen; sit down in my own chair here and get warm, and then the words will thaw and come forth like the notes from the horn of Munchausen's postboy. And your black eyes, Miss Rose, don't look half as saucy as they used to do: and as for Charles,—What, in God's name, is the matter with ye all?"

Helen burst into tears and buried her face in Lady Harrington's bosom.

"Sir Gilbert," said Mowbray, colouring to the temples, "my mother is married!"

"The devil she is!" thundered the old man, clenching his fists. "Married, is she?—Jesabel!—May your poor father's ghost haunt her to her dying hour!—Married! To that canting cur the Vicar of Wrexhill? Is it not so?"

"Even so, Sir Gilbert."

"God help you, my poor children!" said Lady Harrington in accents of the deepest sorrow; "this is a grief that it will indeed be hard to bear!"

"And we come to you for counsel how to bear it, my dear lady," said Mowbray, "though little choice is left us. Yet, Helen says, if you tell her that she must submit to call this man her father, it will be easier for her to do it."

"God bless her, darling child!" said the old lady, fondly caressing her; "how shall I ever find the heart to bid her do what it must break her heart to think of?"

"Bid her call that rascal father?" cried Sir Gilbert. "My Lady Harrington must be strangely altered, Mowbray, before she will do that: she is a very rebellious old lady, and a most prodigious shrew; but you do her no justice, Charles, in believing she would utter such atrocious words."

"But what is to become of Helen, my dear Sir Gilbert, if she quarrel with this man?"

"Come to us, to be sure,—what's the man to her? Has your precious mother made any settlement upon you all?"

"I imagine not; indeed I may say that I am sure she has not."

"Am I a prophet, my lady? how did I tell you Mowbray's sentimental will would answer? And has this meek and gentle lady proved herself deserving of all the pretty things I said of her?"

"There is but small comfort in remembering how truly, how very truly, your predictions foretold what has happened, Gilbert: and he has predicted that you must come here, my sweet Helen; let this come true likewise."

"I cannot leave poor Fanny, Lady Harrington," replied Helen; "I cannot leave my dear and generous friend Rosalind: and yet your offered kindness cheers my heart, and I shall think of it with pleasure and gratitude as long as I live."

"But I thought Fanny was a disciple of this Calvanistic gentleman's? If so, it were better she remained with him till she has learned to distinguish hypocrisy from virtue, and cant from true religion. And for Miss Torrington, I shall rejoice to have her for my guest for as long a time as she can find our old-fashioned mansion agreeable to her."

"You are very, very kind!" replied the two friends in the same breath.

"Then so let it be. Charles, these good girls will stay here for the present; so let us eat our breakfast,—sufficient to the day is the evil thereof. Let me save them from the odious spectacle of the Vicar of Wrexhill establishing himself at Mowbray Park, and the future must take care of itself."

"But, Fanny," said Helen doubtingly, "she looked so unhappy as she followed my mother in last night, that I feel almost certain her fit of enthusiasm is already over."

"So much the better, my dear," said Sir Gilbert; "but it will do her a vast deal of good to watch the reverend gentleman's proceedings in his new character. That scratch upon her intellect must be cauterised before I shall believe it cured; and when the operation is complete, she may join the party here. As for you, my dear boy, when your breakfast is finished I have something for your ear in private."

This *something* was the proposal of a loan

sufficient for the purchase of the commission, and for the supply of the expenses consequent upon joining his corps. But this Mowbray could not be prevailed upon to accept; and his reasons for refusing it were such, that when he could prevail on the friendly old gentleman to listen to him, he could not deny that there was much weight in them.

"If I withdraw myself altogether from my mother at this moment," said Charles, "I shall give her husband an excellent and very plausible excuse for persuading her to banish me from her house and her heart for ever. Whereas if I remain near her, it can hardly, I think, be doubted that some reaction will take place in her feelings, and that she will at last be induced to treat me as a son. At any rate, Sir Gilbert, not even your generous kindness shall induce me to abandon this hope till I feel persuaded that it is a vain one. In my opinion, my duty and my interest equally dictate this line of conduct; and if so, you are the last man in the world to dissuade me from pursuing it."

Whether there were too much of firm decision in Mowbray's manner to leave any hope of overcoming it, or that Sir Gilbert was really convinced by his arguments, was difficult to decide; but he yielded the point on condition that the two girls should be left at Oakley, at least for the present, and be regulated as to their future conduct by the manner in which affairs went on at the Park.

This being settled much to the satisfaction of all parties, Lady Harrington made Miss Torrington describe the entrée of this most undesired interloper; a task which the fair Rosalind performed with great spirit, though she confessed that the impatient feeling to which she yielded in leaving the room was now a cause of regret, as she had lost thereby some notable traits in the history of that eventful hour.

Lady Harrington was greatly delighted at the conduct of Mrs. Williams; and when Charles left them to inform Mrs. Cartwright that her daughter and her ward had accepted an invitation to remain at Oakley for a few days, she

proposed that they should pay her a visit at the Mowbray Arms, both to give her the satisfaction of knowing that her conduct was approved, and likewise to give her the comfort of knowing that Helen and Miss Torrington were for the present removed from such scenes as they had witnessed the night before.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when Lady Harrington's carriage drove across the common to the little public-house already described as the Mowbray Arms. As they approached, they perceived several persons who appeared to be occupied in very eager and deep discussion before the door.

"What are they doing there?" said Lady Harrington.

Rosalind put forward her head to ascertain this, but in an instant drew it back again, exclaiming, "Mr. Cartwright is there!"

"Mr. Cartwright!" exclaimed Helen, turning very pale. "Oh, Lady Harrington, do not let me see him!"

Lady Harrington let down the glass behind the coachman, and said aloud, "Turn round instantly and drive home."

This order being immediately obeyed, the party escaped the sight of the vicar; but in gaining this advantage they lost that of beholding a scene which must have drawn forth a smile, even from Helen herself.

The parties engaged in it were Mrs. Freeman, her daughter Sally, Jem the horse-boy, an elderly traveller called forth by the clamour from the warm comforts of Mrs. Freeman's fireside, and Mr. Cartwright himself. A short retrospect will be necessary to explain his business there.

As soon as the prayer of that morning had reached its final Amen—for as the subject matter of it consisted chiefly in vehement implorings of the divine favour on such of his new family and household as should show unto him the most perfect submission and obedience, the Amen, to make assurance doubly sure, was three several times repeated;—as soon however as it was finally pronounced, the vicar, his lady, and the pale Fanny sat down to breakfast. It would be tedious to tell how many glances of furtive but deep-felt delight the newly-made master of the house cast on each and every of

the minute yet not unimportant differences between this breakfast-table and any others at which he had occupied a place of equal authority: suffice it to say that there were many. The meal, indeed, altogether lasted much longer than usual; but as soon as it was ended, and that Mr. Cartwright had watched with feelings of great complacency the exit of its component parts by the hands of two footmen and a butler, he told his wife that he should be obliged, though most unwillingly, to leave her for some hours, as there were many things to which his personal attention was required.

"Will the rooms be ready to-day for Jacob and Henrietta, my love?"

"They are quite ready now, my dear Mr. Cartwright. When may we hope to see them?"

"To call and give them their orders about coming here, is one part of the business that takes me from you, my sweet Clara. There are some small bills in the village, too, with which your happy husband must not be dunned, sweet love. What ready-money have you, dearest, in the house?"

"Of money I have very little indeed," said

Mrs. Cartwright, unlocking her desk and drawing thence a purse with ten or twelve sovereigns in it. I pay everything by drafts."

"By far the best way, my love. But your drafts, dear, are no longer worth anything; and I must therefore see Corbold, to give orders that everything is put right about that at the banker's, and so forth: and this must really be done without delay."

"Certainly it must," said the lady. "Shall I . . . . I mean, will you send one of the men to Wrexhill to bring him here?"

Mr. Cartwright laid his hand on the bell, but ere he pulled it, checked his hand and said, "No! I must walk to the village, and therefore I will call on him myself."

"Shall you prefer walking, my dear Mr. Cartwright?"

"Why, no: I had forgot: perhaps it would be as well to take the carriage."

"Oh, certainly! And you can bring Henrietta back with you."

"True, dear,—she will certainly want the carriage: I will go, and send her and her bandboxes back in it—and then perhaps drive my-

self back in the cab. It is at the Vicarage, you know."

"Is it? I did not remember that. Then how are they gone this morning?—those undutiful children, I mean, who have chosen to set off this morning without even leaving a message for us. I imagined that Charles had packed them both into the cab, as he has often done his sisters."

"Do not waste a thought on them, my beloved Clara! It is evident that they have neither of them ever felt the slightest affection for you; and would it not be worse than folly for you, beloved and adored as you are, to let any thought of them come to blight our happiness?"

After this and many more tender and affectionate passages had passed between them, Mr. Cartwright set off for the Vicarage *in his own coach*, as he told himself more than once as he drove along; and having informed his son and daughter, not greatly to the surprise of either, that Mowbray Park was to be their future home, he left them to prepare for their removal, telling Henrietta that he would send his

carriage back from Mr. Corbold's, where it should set him down, and that she might fill it, if she chose, with her own luggage, as he should drive Jacob *home* in his cab."

At Mr. Corbold's the conversation was rather religious, and moreover extremely satisfactory to both parties. One or two of his most prayerful parishioners among the tradespeople were next called upon, and permitted to offer their congratulations and thanksgivings, and then told to send their bills to the Park. After this, the reverend bridegroom walked down the village street to the common, returning the humble bowings and curtsyings that crossed his path with a benignant sweetness of countenance that spoke much of the placid contentment that dwelt within.

It was not, however, solely to enjoy this pleasing interchange of heavenly-minded civility that he directed his steps along this well-frequented path—though that was something,—but for the purpose also of transacting a little business with Freeman, the prosperous landlord of the Mowbray Arms.

This good man and his family, it may be

observed, had been great favourites with the family of Mr. Wallace, the late vicar, but stood not so high by many degrees in the estimation of the present. They were honest, industrious, regular church-going people, who had never, during the twenty years they had kept the village inn, been accused or even suspected of having neglected a Sabbath, or of having ever permitted any indecorum either on that or any other day, to be practised under their roof. But they had steadily refused to attend Mr. Cartwright's Tuesday evening's expounding, and his Thursday evening's lecture; the good woman, who was no bad scholar, alleging as the reason for this, that they knew of no such religious service being enjoined by the church of which they were members, and that not considering themselves in any way called upon to amend the ordinances of the religion in which they were born and bred, they thought it more according to their condition to remain at home and endeavour to do their duty in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call them.

This explanation having been very clearly and

distinctly given to the vicar in the presence of several witnesses, before whom he had intended to make a rather marked display of pastoral piety and eloquence, though uttered with very becoming modesty and respect, had produced an impression against the painstaking Dorothy and all her household never to be forgotten or forgiven.

Mr. Cartwright had even taken the trouble of waiting upon the magistrates of the neighbourhood, requesting them to refuse to continue Freeman's licence, assuring them that he was a man whose character was likely to produce a very demoralising influence on his parish. But as these gentlemen had happened to know the good man for many years, they begged to consider of it; and the Vicar of Wrexhill was thus left to discover other ways and means by which to dislodge his obnoxious parishioner.

A very favourable occasion for this now seemed to offer itself, and he accordingly proceeded with an elastic step and dignified gait towards the Mowbray Arms.

At the moment he appeared in sight, the ex-

housekeeper of the Park was describing to Mrs. Freeman and her daughter Sally the return of its mistress and most unwelcome master on the preceding evening.

"Why, here he comes, as sure as I live!" exclaimed Dorothy. "What in the wide world can bring him here? It must be to preachify you, Mrs. Williams."

"And that 's what he shall never do again: —so step out and speak to him outside— there 's a dear good woman; and if I see you can't get rid of him, I 'll make my way out of the back door, and so go round and slip in again and up to my own room before he can catch me."

To facilitate this escape, Mrs. Freeman walked forth and met the reverend bridegroom just as he had reached the foot of the post from whence depended the Mowbray Arms.

"Good morning, Mrs. Freeman," he said, in the peculiar accent in which he always addressed those who were not (to use his own phrase) of his father's house,—a tone in which cold outward civility was struggling with hot

internal hatred;—"Good morning, Mrs. Freeman."

"Good morning, sir," responded Mrs. Freeman with a very proper and ceremonious curtsy.

"I have called to mention to you a necessary alteration that must immediately take place on your premises. You must forthwith take down the Mowbray Arms, which have no longer any connexion with the neighbourhood; and it may be, if you conduct yourselves properly, I may permit you to substitute the Cartwright Arms."

"I believe, sir," said Mrs. Freeman in a tone rather too much approaching to indifference, "that a publican may exhibit what sign he likes, provided it be not offensive to common decency: and I think there may be a many," she added, turning away to re-enter her house, "who might object to the sign you propose, as not coming within that line."

She had made a step or two towards the door, when she turned again upon hearing the voice of the vicar raised to a very unusual pitch. He was not addressing her, however,

but the boy Jem, who chanced at that moment to be entering the little rickyard with a ladder upon his shoulder.

"Bring here that ladder, boy!" vociferated the imperious great man.

The boy obeyed, saying, as he drew near, "What 's your pleasure, sir?"

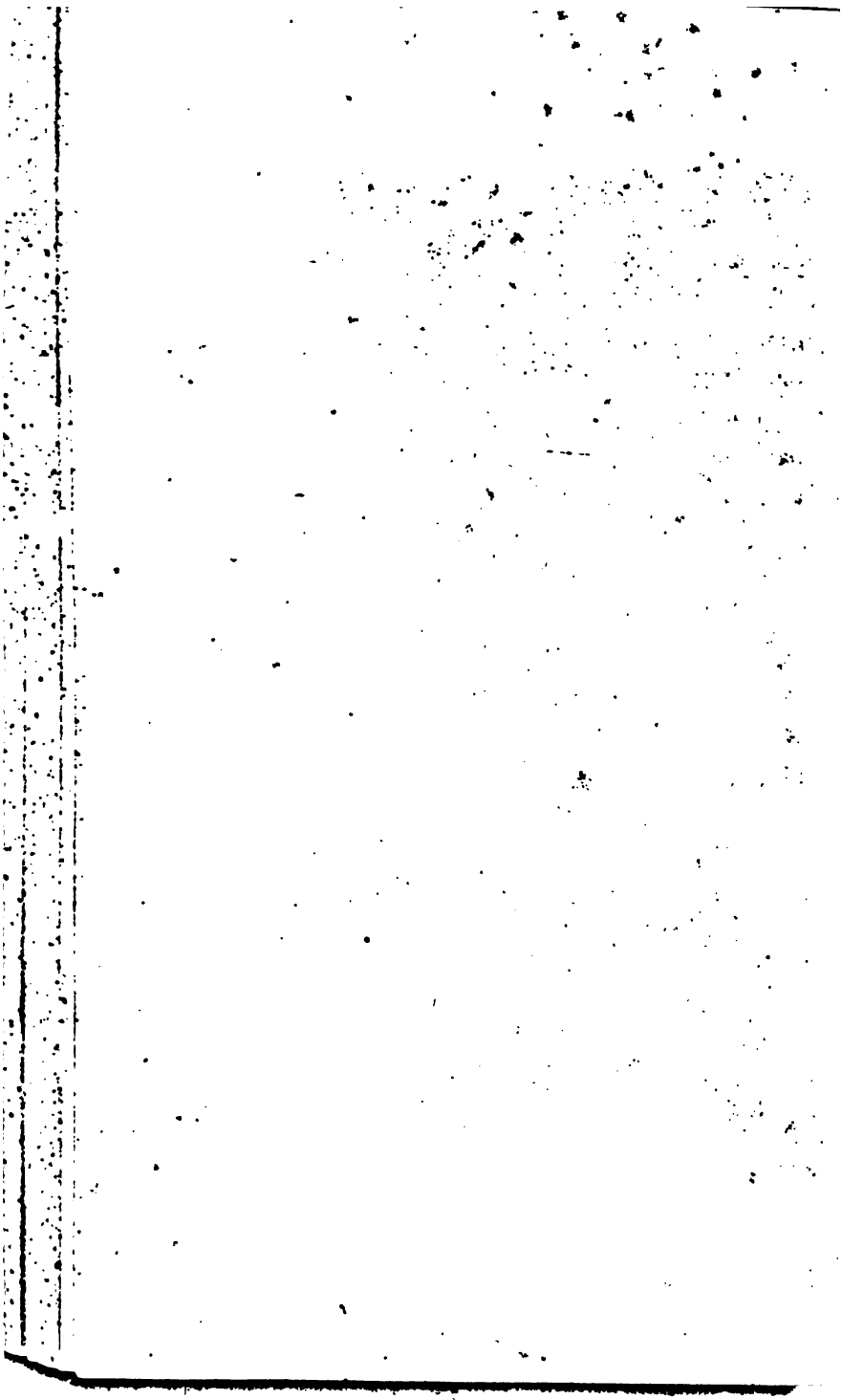
"Fix your ladder against this post, d 'ye hear? and mount—steady, mind,—and take the sign off the hooks. When you have got it loose, you may let it drop. If it breaks, it 's no matter,—it is of no farther value."

"Take down master's sign, your honour?" said Jem, opening his mouth and eyes to their greatest dimensions, but not approaching an inch nearer to the signpost.

"Do you dispute my orders, you little ruffian?" cried the holy vicar, his eyes flashing, and his cane raised in a very threatening attitude.

"You be the parson of the parish, I know," said the boy, looking steadily in his face; "and they do say you be something else besides, now; but I don't see that 's a reason for my lugging master's sign down."

Drawn and Etched by A. Morris
MOWBRAY
ARMS



At this moment the feelings of the man overcame those of the saint, and Mr. Cartwright seizing upon the ladder, succeeded in disengaging it from the boy's hands, and himself placing it against the post, had already got one foot upon it, when Mrs. Freeman stepped back, and taking a quiet but firm hold of his arm, said,

"It is a trespass and a damage you are committing, sir, and I warn you to desist; and I wish with all my heart that there was no worser trespass and damage upon your conscience — or at least that there was still as good time to stop it. But, married or not to the lady, we won't have nothing to do with your arms, Mr. Cartwright, nor your legs neither, if you please, sir; so don't be after climbing that fashion to disturb our property, for it don't look clerical nohow."

Mr. Cartwright raised his voice much beyond its usual pitch, to answer; and at this moment Sally and the traveller, moved by a very natural feeling of curiosity, joined the group.

"Why, what 's the gentleman after?" said

the wayfaring man, deliberately taking out a pair of huge near-sighted spectacles to examine into the mystery. "I should take un to be a parson by his cloth; only I never did hear of a reverend climbing a ladder, save and except the famous Dr. Dodd, as I've read of in the Newgate Calendar."

This harangue, short as it was, saved the Mowbray Arms from farther molestation for the present; for the vicar withdrew his foot. But the glance with which he greeted the speaker was very nearly awful. Dorothy Freeman, however, turned on her heel, nothing heeding it: her guest and daughter followed her into the house; Jem quietly took up his ladder and proceeded on his business; and the Vicar of Wrexhill, with feelings which the hope of future vengeance alone enabled him to endure with decent philosophy, was fain to turn on his heel also and walk off.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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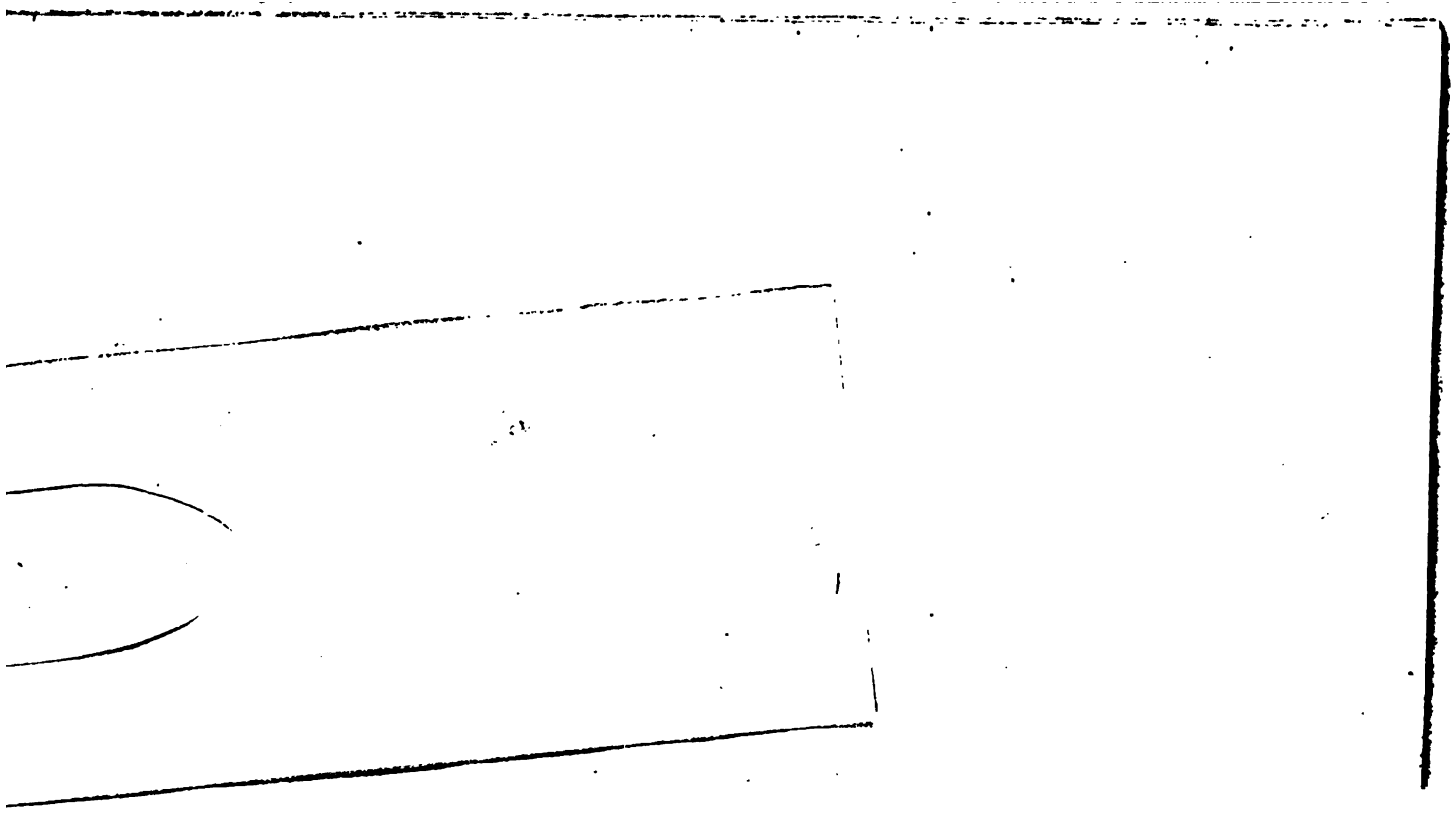

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